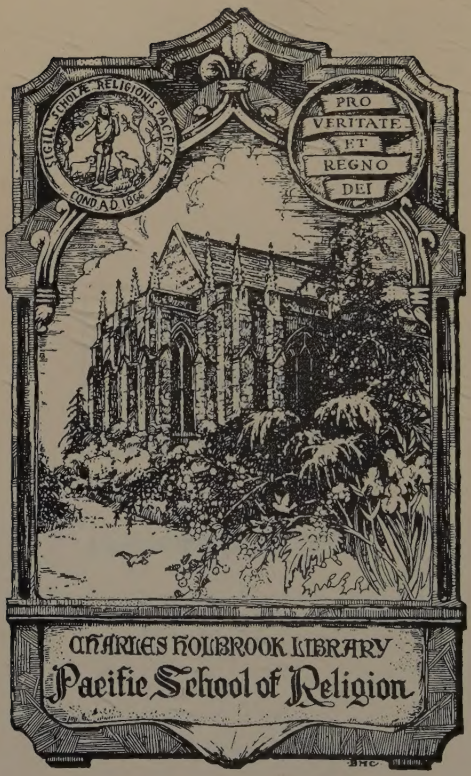
THE RELIGION OF JOHN BURROUGHS

CLIFFORD HAZELDINE OSBORNE


SEMINARIUM RELIGIONIS PACIFICÆ
CONDITUM A.D. 1904
PRO
VERITATE
ET
REGNO
DEI
CHARLES HOLBROOK LIBRARY
Pacific School of Religion

#1.25

THE RELIGION OF JOHN BURROUGHS

THE RELIGION OF JOHN BURROUGHS

BY

CLIFFORD HAZELDINE OSBORNE

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY
1962
CBP
Please return to
Graduate Theological
Union Library
GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
1962

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1930

SFTS Library
105 Seminary Road
San Anselmo, CA 94960
(415) 451-2845
All items are subject to recall

PS1226
.0838
1930

41655

S

MAS
B945O

COPYRIGHT, 1930, BY CLIFFORD HAZELDINE OSBORNE

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO REPRODUCE
THIS BOOK OR PARTS THEREOF IN ANY FORM

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

TO

WILLIAM ALONZO WILCOX

AND

JOHN WILLARD RAUGHT

IN MEMORY OF

A BURROUGHS PILGRIMAGE

PREFACE

Among John Burroughs's contemporaries were many who considered him irreligious because of his attitude to organized Christianity. Those were the days when one sign of true religion was to exercise a pharisaic *hauteur* toward the unorthodox. This attitude toward Burroughs, therefore, might have been expected, but it is strange to find many people to-day who are under the impression that he was a 'freethinker,' a 'skeptic,' or an 'atheist,' or a mysterious mixture of all three. It is to meet this mistaken view that this book has been written, although it is to be feared that some who hold it have too exact a notion as to what true religion is! They have no sympathy with the present tendency to be as inclusive as possible in the matter.

It is a fact that during his saunterings, Burroughs frequently wandered into the cathedral of organized Christianity without wiping from his shoes the delicious but disconcerting mud which they had collected in this terrestrial garden. His avoiding the doormat was not pure oversight, either, for he preferred the 'slabsides' style in religion as well as in outdoor cabins, and was not

at all loath to show his dislike of the religious rococo of the nineteenth century.

It is a much more important fact that he was deeply religious to the point of being mystical. This study will show not only how he treated the furniture in the house of organized religion, but also the kind of spiritual home he built for himself, although it was not entirely weather-proof against the 'cosmic chill.' It will show him courageously turning his back on the faith of his fathers, and, seeking the Truth, plunging into the perilous spate of uncertainties that sweeps over the years of adolescence. Emerging from the flood, assisted by the strong arm of Whitman, he will be found in possession of a hardy faith that is a little too hardy for the majority of us who are soft-shelled. We shall find him at worship in wood and by stream, and he will make real to us the Something 'far more deeply interfused' in Nature. John Burroughs's religion was not the religion of the Church, but it drew him further into the recesses of the world of spirit than orthodoxy is doing at the present time for multitudes of its adherents.

Bias inevitably enters into a study of religion, especially when it differs from one's own, but an admirer of Burroughs will be able to overcome this bias more easily than one who regards him with suspicious eyes. This essay has not been an easy task, for while reading him with an eye to his

religion, he was continually tugging me from my purpose, as though saying, 'Don't waste your time *on me* in this absurd way; just look at marvelous Nature *with me!*' Often his religious views were entirely forgotten as he coaxingly pointed out 'bird and bough,' and a study of his writings proves conclusively that he is at his best observing 'signs and seasons' rather than indulging in 'indoor studies.'

Perhaps it should be explained here that the chapter-headings are all taken from the titles of some of his essays. Burroughs was especially happy in his titles, and those selected cannot be improved upon. What is more to the point, they are in each case quite apposite.

From those interested in tracing the evolution of a man's thinking through the years, there may come the criticism that I have frequently quoted Burroughs without regard to chronological sequence. But he attained maturity unusually early, and the movement his thought made was that of oscillation between the scientific and poetic-religious poles of his mind; the positions he took in early manhood remaining throughout his life.

This essay could not have been written without the extensive use of 'The Life and Letters of John Burroughs' and 'The Heart of Burroughs's Journals,' given to the growing circle of Burroughs-lovers by Dr. Clara Barrus, his physician

and friend. My thanks are due to her for reading the manuscript, and making many valuable suggestions.

CLIFFORD HAZELDINE OSBORNE

WORCESTER, NEW YORK

CONTENTS

I.	'The Phantoms Behind'	1
II.	'Before Genius'	7
III.	'The Breath of Life'	22
IV.	'Soundings'	30
V.	'At Sea'	44
VI.	'The Faith of a Naturalist'	54
VII.	'The Decadence of Theology'	75
	Epilogue	90
	Notes	93

THE RELIGION OF JOHN BURROUGHS

CHAPTER I

'THE PHANTOMS BEHIND'

THE religious environment in which John Burroughs spent his early years was largely responsible for his attitude to the Church, and the religion for which he considered it stood. With its elements of ignorance, superstition, and bigotry, it is embittering to contemplate, for many another seeker of the Eternal Wonder, besides Burroughs, renounced the faith of his fathers in order to retain his intellectual integrity. Their renunciation of the life and teaching of the contemporary Church is no shame to them, but a revelation of her spiritual inadequacy. Their modern representatives leave the fold to-day, for the orthodox are still generally on the defensive against Truth.

That Burroughs was cradled in the midst of a group of Old School Baptists, hidden away in a Catskill settlement, is another historic answer to the question as to whether any good thing can come out of Nazareth. It is also the reason why

the orthodoxy he attacked was of ancient vintage, and not absolutely contemporary, as he himself acknowledged toward the close of his life:

> Of late years I am often moved to say to myself: 'Why kick the old theology after it is dead?' [1]

The deity worshiped by Chauncey A. Burroughs, the father of John Burroughs, and most of his neighbors was 'a jealous and vengeful God.' [2] It is not surprising that he would no more be seen in a Methodist Church than in a saloon,[3] and was at one time afraid that his son John might become a minister of that dangerous denomination.[4] John went so far in acknowledging the possibility of this catastrophe:

> I am bound to say that the God of our neighbor was a more benevolent and merciful God than the one my father believed in; he wanted all to be saved, whether they would be or not.[5]

Yet even the devotees of the Methodist deity seem to have been such for prudential reasons, for one of them tried to 'convert' the boy by suggesting that even his God might have some unpleasant eschatological tricks up his sleeve! [6]

Chauncey Burroughs's God was certainly inscrutable in his ways, for he had created a joyous and beautiful world, as any but jaundiced eyes could see, but which was to be forsaken and shunned by his followers on pain of eternal death. If one left unplucked the flowers of this life, he

might be rewarded with an unutterably monotonous series of puerile occupations in a place called 'heaven.' But then, he might not, for one never knew until his number was called, whether he had been 'predestined' to this frigid Paradise, or to a torrid Gehenna, where experience promised to be more colorful. In view of this disconcerting 'joker' in the pack, it was obviously the wiser policy to enjoy the turn of the cards from day to day. Only a few cared thus to be wise, John among them. One thing to be said in favor of the family deity is that one was not distressed by his terrible presence until death, and perhaps not even then, which no doubt constituted a grain of comfort to more than one 'bad boy.'

This eschatological blight is the secret of the words used by Burroughs of his parents' faith:

> Their minds were much more carnal than mine. They had no taste, no culture, no ideality to satisfy (these they would have called 'carnal' and 'irreligious'), but only the one thought of their souls' salvation — meaning salvation from some threatened evil, in some future world. Their belief, their religion, was not disinterested.[7]

This religious self-centeredness was a trait of the Church of his day which he frequently attacked.

It is somewhat strange that in this Old School Baptist home Sunday was not patterned after the ancient Jewish Sabbath, but was a day of cheerful freedom, filled with many activities, with the

exception of that one which is still something of a problem — fishing! That it did not fail in spiritual influence, Burroughs testifies:

> It has always seemed, and still seems, as if I could be a little more intimate with Nature on Sunday than on a week-day; our relations were and are more ideal, a different spirit is abroad.[8]

If he went to church, he was ministered to by an inadequate pulpit. He tells us that the 'Hard-shell' preachers were uneducated, and never prepared their sermons, but waited for the 'Spirit' to fill their mouths.[9] When they were filled, it was with things out of touch with real life. He used to point out the old meeting-house, saying to Dr. Barrus:

> There I spoiled many a lovely summer Sunday.

Indeed, that bleak, unimaginative sanctuary is still a standing witness to the bleak, unimaginative religion which was propounded within its walls. There was no human warmth nor beauty about it.

Neither family worship nor religious instruction was held in the home, and there were practically no religious books.[10] Nevertheless, this was not so deplorable as it might seem, for it simply meant that the lad had less to unlearn. As it was, he spent too much energy, sometimes, fighting straw men; attacking theological positions which had long been vacated.

Of course, the Bible was in its accustomed place, but when the boy went to it for self-instruction, he was handicapped by a blind bibliolatry, which spoiled for inquiring minds that library of the soul's romance. In this connection, he more than once drew a vivid picture of the neighbor who has already been mentioned, in Biblical combat with his father.[11] Jerry Bouton would drop in of an evening, and in the candlelight, he and Chauncey Burroughs would hurl 'proof-texts' at each other favoring the two sides of the Calvinistic controversy. Meanwhile, young John was looking on, and becoming forever disgusted with his father's cruel Calvinism and Jerry's prudential Methodism. He was also discerning the absurdity of this method of using the Bible, and any handicap he may have had in this direction was soon thrown off.

The practical issues of this self-centered and other-worldly faith were not at all attractive to the growing youth. Little change took place in his father's life after his 'conversion.' [12] This was frequently the case, even where spectacular soul-storms had occurred. It was apparent that the 'saints' produced by it were apt to be peculiar people, a description which they themselves regarded as a compliment.

Here, then, are the religious phantoms which soon ceased to haunt John Burroughs, and which will be taken up in greater detail as we consider his

attitude toward organized Christianity. The boy was never told, by word or sign, that religion at its purest is the thrilling apprehension of Spiritual Life, with the consequent enrichment of human existence. This he had to discover for himself with the aid of guides like Emerson and Wordsworth, Carlyle and Whitman. Yet in spite of the great gulf fixed between them, he felt in later years that he and his father were bound to each other by the common tie of religion:

> Father knew me not. All my aspirations in life were a sealed book to him, as much as his peculiar religious experiences were to me. Yet I reckon it was the same leaven working in us both. The delight he had in his Bible, in his hymn-book, in his Church, in his creed, I have in literature, in the poets, in Nature. His was related to his soul's salvation hereafter, mine to my soul's salvation here.[13]

It is possible to 'experience religion' without experiencing God. Indeed, that was the secret of much of the spurious Christianity of Chauncey Burroughs's generation, as well as that of succeeding generations. With this in mind, we can appreciate a significant remark John Burroughs once made:

> Father experienced religion; I experienced Nature.[14]

CHAPTER II

'BEFORE GENIUS'

AGAINST this background of upland farm life, with its simple joys and sorrows, its modest needs, its absence of culture, and its impossible religion, it is interesting to see the young genius carving out scientific and philosophical channels of thought for himself, and using to the utmost the literary tools at his disposal. In fact, his love of books and eager aspirations very much disturbed his father,[1] who knew not what might become of his 'queer' son, and was haunted by the vision of his filling a Methodist pulpit.

The scientific strain within him showed itself early in a cool skepticism and a devastating curiosity. The Devil was the first object of his clear, calm gaze,[2] and Milton the second, when he told an Ashland Collegiate Institute classmate that he doubted the historicity of 'Paradise Lost,' one of their school texts.[3] His curiosity rose to reckless heights when the end of the world was expected hourly by some of the neighbors, for he waited with great interest to see what the catastrophe would be like.[4] He was deeply disappointed when his expectations were not realized, and the regret lingered, for at sixty-six he still longed for the grand finale that never came off!

Burn over Neighbor Allen's field this afternoon and enjoy it much. If the world is ever to be burned up, I want to be allowed to set the fire.[5]

Dr. Barrus says of him at eleven years of age that 'the world within is a powerful rival to the world without,'[6] which was early, even for a budding philosopher. He himself says that between the ages of seventeen and twenty-six he was 'reading and thinking and trying to get hold of myself.'[7] A booklist[8] which he compiled at eighteen for his future reading is startling in its maturity, and for our purpose it is important to notice the following suggestions:

Plato, by E. Pond
Ancient Philosophy
Modern Philosophy
Philosophy by Channing
Positive Philosophy
Essay on the Formation of Opinions, and the *persuit* [*sic*] of truth
Bacon's Works
Psychology
Butler's Analogy
Religious Truth by Professor Hitchcock
Theological, etc.
History of the Reformation

Locke's philosophy held an important place in his reading at this time, and one occasionally fancies he sees the shade of the English philosopher flitting across some of Burroughs's metaphysical pages. He bought Dr. Dick's works because they promised philosophical adventures, but in his characteristic way he writes:

I think it was their excess of what was called 'Christian Philosophy' that finally sickened me.

I began to want my philosophy and my science straight, without any of the sugar and water of an over-ripe religious sentiment.[9]

When he was nineteen, and in attendance at Cooperstown Seminary, New York, his first printed essay saw the light of day.[10] It was called 'Vagaries *viz.* Spiritualism,' and signed 'Philomath,' which certainly did not indicate that he would later be known for his felicitous titles! But, as he remarked, it foreshadowed his lifelong delight in crusading against shams.[11] However, the thinker was keeping pace with the crusader, and two months later he read an essay at the Students' Exhibition in which he revealed the course of his thought, declaring that man's essential duty is to fan into a steady blaze the spark of divinity within himself.[12] This Emersonian touch is an indication of his reading. Many good things opened their hearts to him from the shelves of the seminary library, those having the most enduring influence being the works of Emerson, Wordsworth, and Carlyle. It might be true to say that he revered Emerson, loved Wordsworth, and admired Carlyle.

His early days with Emerson, he tells us, were a 'green apple' stage, but after Seminary this attack of indigestion passed, and he could say:

I read him in a sort of ecstasy. I got him in my blood, and he colored my whole intellectual outlook. He appealed to my spiritual side; his

boldness and unconventionality took a deep hold upon me.[13]

All that summer, while at the Old Home, I lived on those volumes. I steeped myself in them.[14]

On Emerson's burial day he meditated:

Emerson was my spiritual father in the strictest sense. It seems as if I owe nearly all, or whatever I am, to him. I caught the contagion of writing and of authorship before I knew his books, but I fell in with him just in time. His words were like the sunlight to my pale and tender genius....[15]

Just before his own death, his mature judgment of Emerson was:

Emerson had more of the divine in his face, and in his life, than any man of his time.[16]

And more than once he said that he was not so much like a saint as a god.[17]

If he revered Emerson for his 'divinity,' he loved Wordsworth for his sweet spirituality, and there is a touch of affection in all of his references to him. Two will suffice:

Wordsworth was in many ways a man after my own heart. He had the religious sentiment and the sense of the mystery of things....[18]

No other English poet has touched me quite so closely as Wordsworth.... He stands for a particular phase of human thought and experience, and his service to certain minds is like an initiation into a new order of truths.[19]

Burroughs was but one of many young men who stood by with great delight to watch Carlyle wield the bludgeon, and a youth who hated shams was bound to be drawn to him. It cannot thereby be said that Carlyle moulded Burroughs's life, for 'John o' Birds' was not given to aggressive morality. It would be truer to say that Carlyle attracted him by supplementing a deficiency in his character, for he confessed to a lack of 'firm moral fibre.' [20]

After his seminary days he matured rapidly, and married in 1857, when he was but twenty. Yet lying hidden beneath the ecstasies of early wedded days were hungers which no human relationship could satisfy. Writing to his young wife, who lived in a different universe, he pleads:

> I know not why I should not try to realize my aspirations; why I should not strive to rise to that sphere toward which my soul continually aspires. ... The good, the beautiful, and the true my soul worships.... Open your heart to the good and the beautiful in Nature and in life, and my soul will go out to yours as naturally as the magnet turns to the Pole.[21]

Surely Emerson had much to do with this mental ferment! All this time, he was teaching in various localities with no great satisfaction to himself or his wife. Struggles for a living, and for domestic harmony, were accompanied by the strivings of his awakened spirit to seek full expression, which

he described as 'a spirit racked with thoughts and inward struggles.' A letter written in his twenty-first year is a poignant cry:

I look at the stars, I look at the setting sun, I look toward the blue horizon, I ramble through the busy city, I delve into the sea of books, I struggle with the mysteries of eternity, and nothing satisfactory can I find. All is a sliding sandbank beneath me. Peace, Beauty, Satisfaction, Rest — where, Oh, where can ye be found? Ah! my dearest girl, this poor life cannot be all! this inward longing and struggling point to something beyond the stars! [22]

In a few months he would be making his first contact with a master-spirit who would show him how to look for these values nearer at hand than the Milky Way, and be to him a rock of support in his dire need, for it was while teaching at East Orange, New Jersey, at this time, that he first read some of Walt Whitman's poems in the 'Saturday Press.'

It was this journal that for the next two years contained articles of his, having a strong philosophical tinge. Something is to be expected of a young man barely of age who makes out the following list of proposed essays:

Revolutions	Emerson	Opposites
Mystery	Carlyle	Reason
Silence	The Philosophy of the Porch	The Indian
Universality	Genius	The African
A Man and his Times		Quakerism

The Affirmative Man	Individuality	Grammar
Analogy	Nicknames	St. Pierre
The Boy and his Education	Mohammedanism	Memory
Character and Faculty	Expression	Shakespeare

These were not all written, but some of them were carried through with effect. When he was twenty-three his 'Expression' appeared in the November, 1860, issue of the 'Atlantic Monthly,' with a flavor so Emersonian as to convince Lowell, the editor, that it was a clever case of plagiarism, until he proved himself to be mistaken. This essay was an achievement, not simply as a 'breaking into' the 'Atlantic,' but as an anticipation by fifty years of Bergson's concept of an *élan vital*. This year was also memorable because it saw the beginning of a valuable friendship with E. M. Allen, through whom he was drawn to Whitman.

In the next year came the publication of 'Analogy' in the 'Knickerbocker.' There was still the philosophical cast in Burroughs's thought and style, but the Emersonian was giving place to his own, with hints of that nature-lore which was to delight thousands in after-days. 'Analogy' also indicated an acceptance of Darwin's thesis, which he held for the remainder of his life. At forty-six he writes:

> Finished Darwin's 'Descent of Man' this morning.... I have no more doubt of its main conclusions than I have of my own existence.[23]

He calls the 'Origin of Species' 'a true wonder-book.' [24]

This year Burroughs read 'Leaves of Grass' for the first time. In his 'Notes on Walt Whitman,' his first book, he testifies to the great moral service it rendered him at a time when he was in a state of instability. An indication of his inner chaos may be gathered from a passage in his journal, written at twenty-two:

> In the progress of the mind there are periods when we seem to be farther from the truth and a right knowledge of things than when we set out. Thought and study change our standpoint, and before we have worked through to another, so that we see things from the ground of the intellect, and not of experience, we are apt to be unbelievers, scoffers, and skeptics, having no faith in anything permanent and solid....[25]

If he had done nothing else for Burroughs, Whitman could have been satisfied with nursing his disciple through his tempestuous adolescence. Of 'Leaves of Grass' Burroughs wrote:

> I plume myself that I did not have to wait for somebody to say to me, 'This is great.' I knew it was as soon as I read it. I picked out what I could understand, and let the rest go till I grew to understand it.[26]

Still teaching, the next year (1862) was momentous for him. He had found a new and lasting friend in Myron B. Benton, a rural poet and

philosopher, with whom he had many interests in common, while Allen had been writing from Washington of scenes and people, with Whitman bulking large in the picture. But November found him steeped in gloom. He was twenty-five, and still struggling through many reverses to get a foothold in the rocky ascent to achievement and recognition. He was away from his wife — a frequent state of affairs, owing to his vocation, her ill-health, and their very limited means. He was also unappreciated by his own family.

However, he knew Emerson's gospel of self-reliance, and he had discovered Whitman! So, while incongruously reading medicine in the office of the country doctor in Olive, New York, his depressed but youthful spirit broke from her close confinement, and soared out and away singing a strong song, one which has become a Psalm of Life to many who have known nothing of his other writings — 'Waiting':

Serene, I fold my hands and wait,
Nor care for wind, nor tide, nor sea;
I rave no more 'gainst time or fate,
For lo! my own shall come to me.

I stay my haste, I make delays;
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine shall know my face.

Asleep, awake, by night or day,
The friends I seek are seeking me;

No wind can drive my bark astray,
Nor change the tide of destiny.

What matter if I stand alone?
I wait with joy the coming years;
My heart shall reap where it hath sown,
And garner up its fruit of tears.

. . . . . .

The stars come nightly to the sky,
The tidal wave comes to the sea;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me.

He once said that this was simply Old School Baptist predestination 'watered down, or watered up,' [27] and some may say that he was whistling to keep his courage up, but he elsewhere gives a truer description of it:

It puts in simple and happy form some common religious aspirations, without using the religious jargon.[28]

It is akin to Whittier's

And in the maddening maze of things,
When tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed ground my spirit clings:
I know that God is good!

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

Whittier actually gave Burroughs's poem vogue

by including it in his 'Songs of Three Centuries,' and said to him at their meeting, 'I know thee. I have read all that thee's written. I know thy "Waiting" by heart.' [29] The poem also expresses the strong self-determination of Henley's 'Invictus,' without the boisterous bravado of Henley's bloody but unbowed head.

In June of the new year — and how momentous a year! — he and Benton had a glorious interview with Emerson at West Point,[30] and about the same time he first opened Audubon's 'Birds' in the library of the Military Academy there. Just as the focussing of Emerson's influence on him a few years before had initiated a spiritual fermentation, still in process, so Audubon's introduction to the fascinating realm of birds stirred him deeply:

> I took fire at once. It was like bringing together fire and powder.[31]

At the mere opening of a book, John o' Birds came to birth! Henceforward, his style would sing, sometimes with lyric limpidness, sometimes in piercing melancholy, but sing it must, for there was a bird in his heart.

Emerson, Audubon, and then, a month later, Whitman again drew near in a letter from Allen:

> Walt is much interested in you, and I sketched your history some to him. He would like to know you.[32]

What thrills and dreams followed the receipt of

that letter! Meanwhile, the leaven of Emerson was doing its sure work, as may be seen in two quotations. In August, Allen, Benton, and Burroughs made an Adirondack expedition, and in an unpublished passage of the essay describing it, there is a revealing flash:

> How we have tugged at the old problems, seeking again the unknown quantity whose symbol is not *x*, but the visible universe! Loafing and inviting our souls in forest and field, by lake and river and mountain, what converse we have had! what questionings, what glorious metaphysical wrestlings, what uplifting and liberation of spirit![33]

A few words concerning his life-purpose occur in a letter to Benton:

> I stated, I believe, that I lived for my pleasure, or development, and had no other purpose before me.[34]

The carelessness of wording here might lead the unwary to find parallels in Epicureanism, but we need look no further than Concord or Walden for the source of this sentiment.

Allen's correspondence was making the Civil War very vivid to Burroughs, but his threat to enter the Union Army never matured. He was in a state of indecision. His vocational and domestic distractions were thwarting his spirit's true burgeoning. At last, he decided to escape to a

new environment, but it was not simply his distractions that drove him, nor the Washington of Allen's letters that drew him. For two years he had been enticed by glimpses of Whitman, and he could no longer hold out when he knew that Whitman would like to see him:

It was really Walt that drew me to Washington — through Allen's letters.[35]

Reaching Washington in October, he was soon writing to Mrs. Burroughs: 'I have seen Walt also, and think him glorious'; [36] but going through the depths a little later, he found that sauntering with 'glorious old Walt,' and discussing high matters did not satisfy all his pressing needs. After a distressing period of uncertainty, which need not be detailed, he eventually found a permanent position in the Treasury Department, and for ten years guarded a vault in the Currency Bureau — strange situation for a soaring soul!

It was in these days that he suggested either a new basis for his home life, or else separation that should be permanent, declaring that while he himself was no paragon, he disliked his wife's pride, worldliness, self-approval, uncharitableness, and religious position. This is illuminating, and is only recorded here, because he is singling out the typically unchristian traits of the religious. He is passing his permanent judgment on organized Christianity, a judgment he never saw

cause to revise. He asks to be allowed freedom in his manner of living, specifying among other details:

[to]... spend my Sundays as I please, go to church when I please (which you know will not be often), have and see what friends I please, in short, live and die as I please, by the grace of God.[37]

In the same letter he reiterates the note struck in 'Waiting':

I have much confidence in myself, in my rectitude, in my intellect, in my soundness of heart.... I see my way clearly.[38]

The influence of Emerson is obvious here! This, and the following are from the pen of a man who knows whither he is going, and why. Here is a seeker who exults in the knowledge that he is on the trail of the Eternal.

If you had the love of Nature and of books that I have, I see you would have been much happier. Take away from me... my delight in reading and writing, and my love for the earth and sky... and I should be the most miserable of mortals... a great hope and ambition in me... grave and serious in thought... and always more or less occupied with the great questions of the universe, and with the ways and works of God, as shown in things around me.... If fortune favors my purse but starves my heart, I have but little to be thankful for.... I see clearly that the only kind of success worth having is inward, virtual, unseen; the gaining of wisdom, the understanding of this

universe; the seeing beauty and meaning in everything God has made — the success of Socrates who owned nothing; had no business or profession, and was at last poisoned by his countrymen. This is the only success — in one's soul — and not in his purse or title-deeds.... I have a success of which I never hoped or dreamed, and which I know now is as immortal as myself. I am willing to be called wicked and irreligious; it matters not; with the earth and the sky, and the summer of Infinite Peace in my soul, what need I care! [39]

That is promising at twenty-six! Why these words of wisdom and spirit should be uttered by a young man with no visible achievement to his credit is the question immediately confronting us.

CHAPTER III

'THE BREATH OF LIFE'

THE reason why John Burroughs uttered the triumphant peal of self-determination with which the last chapter closed, although emerging from a series of bitter experiences, can best be explained by the powerful influence of Whitman, who was the very breath of life itself to the young seeker. Just four years before he had written in his journal:

> That man is my Pilot who has traversed the seas before me; that man is my Master in whom I can see my own green, crude feelings and grub instincts ripened and hanging upon him like apples, absorbing the rich, golden autumn sunlight. Hence, men become leaders only by greater *power of expression; by affording a free passage to that which is choked and obstructed in others. They shape into notes and cadences the music that, unexpressed, is ravishing other souls.* That man is our Hero who is more ourselves than we are; who beats us at our own game; who surpasses us in our own directions.[1] [Italics mine.]

The inexpressibility of the music that had been beating in his breast for years had produced changing moods and fretful wanderings. In Whitman, all he felt and resolved was fully and

frankly expressed, not merely in word, but in life itself. The theory of living which he had drunk in from Emerson and Carlyle was demonstrated in this divine vagabond. In Whitman, young Burroughs found life, abundant, free, daring, and unashamed. Schemes and dreams that come true are responsible for life's greatest excitements, and blessed is he whose airy castle crystallizes into reality. But to see one's philosophy of life, hitherto fumbled by one's self, perfectly practiced by an expert, is a source of joyous power. One may never quite be able to equal the expert — Burroughs did not — but one thing is assured, it can be done, for it has been done!

Burroughs was twenty-six, and Whitman forty-four, when they met. The younger man's impressions are found in his correspondence with Benton:

> I have been much with Walt.... I love him very much. The more I see and talk with him the greater he becomes to me. He is as vast as the earth, and as loving and noble... I am convinced that Walt is as great as Emerson, though after a different type.... There is nothing more to be said after he gives his views; it is as if *Nature herself* had spoken. And so kind, sympathetic, charitable, humane, tolerant a man I did not suppose was possible....He appreciates everybody, and no soul will get fuller justice in the next world than it gets at his hands here.[2] [Italics mine.]

Two years after this first meeting, Burroughs entered this appraisal in his notebook:

He was in that felicitous mood almost habitual to him, I have since found, during which flesh and skin become, as it were, transparent, and allow his great summery, motherly soul to shine through. ... I said: Here is a new type of man, a new type of gentleman, a new type of philosopher — a veritable *new ethics and gospel*.... For two years, therefore, I have been studying this wonderful man, and have come, not only to love him as a friend, but to look to him as the greatest, sweetest soul I have yet met in this world.[3] [Italics mine.]

These words are reminiscent of those at the end of Plato's 'Apology,' as he writes of his beloved Socrates. They are also suggestive of the sort of thing his disciples said of their beloved Galilean. In this connection it is important to notice other words that confirm the suggestion:

Walt Whitman is the Christ of the modern world — he alone redeems it; justifies it; shows it divine; floods and saturates it with divine-human love.[4]

From the day of their meeting, Whitman was just this to Burroughs. If the Church had sooner begun to present Jesus as the virile personality she has lately discovered him to be, Burroughs might have been drawn to him as one 'who is more ourselves than we are; who beats us at our own game; who surpasses us in our own direc-

tions,' and therefore his Hero. As it was, he found his contemporary Christ in Whitman.

The passage just quoted is one of several parallels which are drawn in Burroughs's writings between Jesus and Whitman. He mentions that he always spoke 'as one having authority and not as a scribe,' [5] and he believes that:

> His extraordinary self-estimate and self-awareness are equally noticeable. We should probably have to go back to *sacred history* to find a parallel case.[6] [Italics mine.]

Of his way with men, he writes:

> His great cure-all is love; he gives himself instead of a sermon. His faith in the remedial power of affection, comradeship, is truly Christlike. Lover of sinners is also his designation.[7]

And again:

> Christlike, Walt seemed to prefer the company of publicans and sinners to that of the 'best society' of his time.... Whitman identifies himself with sinners in his poems in a way that to me does not suggest the 'semi-hobo,' but suggests the god. I love to dwell on his divine commonness.[8]

The parallel comes out again as Burroughs replies to Higginson's criticism of Whitman for not enlisting in the Union Army:

> Could there be anything more shocking and incongruous than Whitman killing people? One would as soon expect Jesus Christ to go to war. Whitman was the lover, the healer, the recon-

ciler.... He was not an athlete, or a rough, but a great tender mother-man.[9]

Burroughs speaks of both Emerson and Carlyle as godlike, but this usage is very occasional compared to the way in which he lavishes it upon Whitman. A further passage with obvious implications will suffice:

Then, much more rarely, there are born to a race or people men who are like an irruption of life from another world, who belong to another order, who bring other standards.... It is here, in my opinion, that we must place Whitman; not among the minstrels and edifiers of his age, but among its prophets and saviors.[10]

It is not hard to understand why Whitman was the standard by which Burroughs measured men. Whether they were poets or philosophers, or just men, he brought them into the blazing light of his Sun. It was E. M. Allen who played Andrew in drawing his brother to the Master, and Burroughs was certainly a warm-hearted, impetuous Peter in his relation to Whitman, except that he never denied him! Through twenty-nine years their friendship ripened, and the younger man never found reason to go back on his first impressions. He freely expresses his great debt:

I love him as I never loved any man.... I owe more to him than to any other man in the world. He brooded me; he gave me things to think of, he taught me generosity, breadth, and an all-

embracing charity. He was a tremendous force in my life.[11]

In 1866, three years after meeting Whitman, Burroughs commenced writing his first book, which was a defense of his hero. 'Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person,' was a gospel proclaiming and vindicating his friend, about whom no book had as yet been written, although several articles of appreciation and vituperation had appeared in magazines. Our author was almost over-eager in defense, and in those days only a suggested slight upon Whitman was sufficient to touch his pen with acid. He spoke of 'Our Cause' with true apostolic ardor, and after Whitman's death he exhorted a group of fellow-disciples in England as though he were another Paul or Ephesian John:

I trust... that your band of Whitman brothers has lost none of your love for him or for one another.[12]

The adoring John is seen in the many instances he gives of Whitman's 'summery, motherly soul' in everyday contacts. He is glad to tell of his pity and sympathy for the disabled soldiers of both sides, and how he used to wheedle cookies out of Mrs. Burroughs for them on special days.[13] Whitman's kindness to a stray soldier is memorably told, with Burroughs's comment:

I saw this incident would do more to strengthen

and encourage him, and help restore his lost manhood, if so it was, than all the sermons and homilies and tracts that have ever been preached or printed.[14]

He tells also of the way the 'Mother-man' drove a Broadway stage all of one winter, that the disabled driver might rest and recuperate without losing his job. The incident of the baby in the Washington horse-car is well worth looking up,[15] if only to reveal Burroughs as an evangelist. His appreciation of Whitman's saviorhood comes out very clearly in these incidents.

This idea of saviorhood Burroughs expresses in connection with Whitman's attitude toward sex:

... an heroic sacrifice, and atones for the sins of us all — the sins of perverting, denying, abusing the most sacred and important organs and functions of our bodies.[16]

These words would find general agreement to-day, but it was no light matter to write them in 1896! The salvation which Whitman offered was fullness of life, and Burroughs found in 'Leaves of Grass' a picture of it:

We behold man reconciled, happy, ecstatic, full of reverence, awe, and wonder, reinstated in Paradise — the paradise of perfect knowledge and unrestricted faith.[17]

This is more attractive than some conceptions of salvation offered by the Church in her more

uninspired moments, and is coming more and more to be the official view of the Kingdom of God.

As a young man, Burroughs stated that Emerson had taken the highest step in morals and religion, leaving Whitman that honor in art.[18] It is significant, therefore, that when he was almost seventy, he revised this judgment, and gave Whitman the pinnacle formerly occupied by Emerson. Writing to Richard Watson Gilder, he said:

> Emerson has already had his day.... I turn to him now as to a reminiscence, to try to call up those days of my youth. I turn to Whitman as to the sea, or the starry heavens, to expand my soul.[19]

As Burroughs's first book was of Whitman, so was the last essay in his last book published before his death — 'The Poet of the Cosmos' in 'Accepting the Universe.' Whitman was his Alpha and Omega, for he represented to him 'an all-inclusiveness and sympathy like that of God himself.'[20] He was his Christ. From 'The Poet of the Cosmos' we select his final word:

> I am bold enough to say frankly that I look upon him as the greatest personality — not the greatest intellect, but the most symbolical man, the greatest incarnation of mind, heart, and soul, fused and fired by the poetic spirit — that has appeared in the world during the Christian era.[21]

CHAPTER IV

'SOUNDINGS'

A MODERN definition of religion would be that it is the quest for a completely satisfying life, a statement which would have mystified Burroughs's generation, for it associated life with sin. It might be said that the churchmen of the last century did not believe in being alive until they were dead!

This definition of religion will certainly include John Burroughs, and others like him, for if ever a man bent his energies in this quest, he did. Sometimes he hinted at a conviction that he was more religious than the orthodox, with the confidence of a great spirit that knows its own altitude. Be that as it may, he feels he may claim:

> My character is fundamentally reverent and religious. The religion of my fathers underwent in me a kind of metamorphosis and became something which would indeed have appeared like rank atheism to them, but which was nevertheless full of the very essence of true religion — love, reverence, wonder, unworldliness, and devotion to ideal truth.... It was rationalism touched with mysticism and warm with poetic emotion.[1]

He writes in autobiographical strain:

> The serene, reverent, and truth-loving mind will never be without religion, because these traits are the fountain-head of all religious emotion.

Add the logical faculty, and the gift of imagination, and such a mind will go to nature for its religion rather than to creeds and traditions.[2]

The quest of some for an abundant life takes sensual and materialistic forms, but the religion of John Burroughs possessed an inwardness and spirituality of peculiar purity. It is here that we discover the real influence of Wordsworth upon him, whose poetic purity and spirituality he often praised: 'Wordsworth was... the voice of pure Nature.'[3]

It is interesting to see how many times he speaks of spirituality, commending it wherever discovered, and pleading for more of it where it seemed to be lacking. Dr. Barrus, writing of his journal, says:

> The earlier entries show how essentially spiritual-minded Burroughs always was. He began as a thinker and an incipient philosopher, long before he became the keen observer and interpreter of Nature; but all through life, while retaining his objective interest in Nature, he sought her chiefly for what lies back of her.[4]

Whitman is an example of what he expected in others:

> Whitman is about the most uncompromising spiritualist in literature; with him, all things exist by and for the soul.[5]

This definition of spirituality he applies ruthlessly to literature. He exalts 'spiritual' writing:

If you are ahungered for the bread of life... Go...to...the great personal poets, the men who have spiritual and religious values as well as poetic.[6]

Such are the spirit books.... We read them, not to find facts of history, or science, or art, etc., but for the delicious spiritual power that flows into us from their pages.[7]

On the other hand, he criticizes Lowell:

Lowell is not a healing or helpful writer; he does not touch the spirit, the soul.... He has no religion, none of that subtler piety and goodness and loving kindness that mark the great teachers and founders.[8]

And of Mrs. H. B. Stowe:

The deeper and finer chords of the soul she is not master of, and no Beecher ever was.... They had the eloquence of passion, action, earnestness, but not of the still, small voice, the deep inner voice of pure Art.... Nothing can take high rank as a work of art that does not touch and thrill the soul.[9]

The same appraisal is given of the 'Spoon River Anthology':

I learn nothing new, I love nothing more, I am brought no nearer to Nature, or the Infinite.[10]

Burroughs was convinced that science was not enough:

Soul only can reach soul. Literature alone can reach and enrich and humanize the soul. The

mere facts of natural science are like the inorganic elements.[11]

Where there is no vision, no intuitive perception of the great fundamental truths of the inner spiritual world, science will not save us.[12]

Speaking for himself of his driving purpose, he writes:

It is not nature for its own sake that has mainly drawn me... but nature for the soul's sake — the inward world of ideals and emotions.[13]

His religion is also expressed in his exaltation of Truth, although he never decided just what was meant by that term. Is there not a thrill in discovering on the fly-leaf of one of his notebooks, begun at twenty-two, 'My life is an apprenticeship to Truth'?[14] The necessity for following after Truth seems to have impressed him deeply in those early days, and two great passages are the fruit of this same year of his life:

Every man has an inlet into the great deep if he will only keep it open and free from sticks and rubbish. In youth the passage is free, but the cares and business of the world soon clog and choke it up, so that we become a little muddy bay, cut off from the great ocean. A man's soul can only be kept pure and healthy by a constant reception of truth; or at least a free communion with truth.[15]

What an immense seacoast Carlyle has! Most men have no seacoast; no outlook to the great

ocean of truth; no port or harbor therein; but are mostly inland — their relation to truth relative and second-hand; and consequently have no treasures upon the great deep.[16]

The vigorous influence of Carlyle is also seen in another passage on the same subject:

The perfect flower of religion opens in the soul only when all self-seeking is abandoned. The divine, the heroic attitude is: 'I ask not Heaven, I fear not Hell; I crave the truth alone, whithersoever it may lead.'[17]

Burroughs's love of Truth remained with him all his days, and much later in life we pick up the old strain, this time inspired by Darwin:

How much more valuable to a man is an instinct for the truth than for any special gift or accomplishment! If he craves the truth alone, he will not be disturbed if his theories and systems fall in ruins about his head. Then I must find a larger and deeper truth, he says.[18]

There is no doubt that in this regard he was more religious than the orthodox have usually been, whom the fear of Truth has constantly haunted.

It is not enough, of course, for a man only to speak of spirituality; he must possess it. Was John Burroughs justified in defining his religion as 'rationalism touched with mysticism'? In face of the abundant evidence there is but one answer — his sensitivity to 'something far more deeply interfused' was 'frank mysticism.'[19] It

was that attractive form which is light-heartedly damned by the ugly epithet 'pantheism.'

The chief characteristics of the mystic are: A lover's ardent desire for union with Reality; a cheerful forsaking of the 'world,' if necessary to consummate the relationship; and psychical experiences, though these are not always present, and are not essential.

These characteristics can be detected in John Burroughs by those who can read the signs scattered throughout his writings. Everywhere one may find records of the soundings he made in the fathomless ocean of the Eternal, for to use his other figure, he always kept his inlet into the Great Deep open, and free from sticks and rubbish.

Some of these soundings occur in early boyhood, and may appear insignificant unless they are viewed in the light of his maturer experiences. Thus, there are instances of emotional exaltation which indicate the high sensitivity of the farm-lad. When he was four and eight years of age, he was confronted by the world of birds in ways that stirred him to the depths.[20] On two occasions the spiritual mastered the primitive in an amusing way. The beauty of a 'blue wave' of pigeons and a superb red fox captivated him to the extent of paralyzing his trigger-finger![21] One Sunday morning the reading of a life of Washington lifted him out of himself.[22] It was a brilliant

summer morning that found him calling and shouting and exulting, for he was:

literally intoxicated — with what, I do not know, I only remember that life seemed amazingly beautiful. I was on the crest of some curious wave of emotion, and my soul sparkled and flashed in the sunlight.[23]

These experiences should not be set down merely as the romanticisms of childhood and the bursting bubbles of adolescent fermentation. Most of us outgrow them, but Burroughs did not; they were an accompaniment of his mature spiritual experience.

The soundings he was making at twenty-two produced this mystical entry in his journal:

Who has not had the tide, the real divine afflatus of ecstasy, in some serene beatitude, flow in upon his shores till all the old landmarks ... were entirely obliterated, and he could embark at any point upon the sea of bliss? [24]

These exaltations are not so important as his actual communion with Nature, and longing for the greatest intimacy with her. He once wrote:

The babe in the womb is not nearer its mother than are we to the invisible sustaining, mothering powers of the universe, and to its spiritual entities.[25]

And he reveled in the thought.

The adventurers of the spirit, whether prophets

or seers, have frequently expressed their spiritual experience in symbolic actions. In 'The Real John Burroughs' William Sloane Kennedy reveals this sensuous aspect of Burroughs's love for Nature:

> I saw him lie down and roll over on the pine needles in sheer animal delight and love of the earth contact.[26]

This delight is expressed in terms of hunger:

> How I delighted to see the plow at work this morning! The earth is ripe for it, fairly lusts for it, and the freshly turned soil looks good enough to eat.[27]

> In certain moods, how good the earth, the soil seems! One wants to feel it with his hands and smell it — almost taste it.[28]

After what must have been a day of high communion, he writes:

> How I soaked up the sunshine to-day! At night I glowed all over. My whole being had an earth bath. There was a feeling of freshly-plowed land in every cell of my brain.[29]

A collection of deeper soundings properly begins with a reference to Wordsworth:

> I think [Wordsworth] is the first and highest of modern solitary poets, and that he speaks, or sings, warmly and genuinely, even grandly, out of that solitude which lurks by mountain lakes, and broods over lonely moors..., Wordsworth

expresses to me that delicious companionship which I have with the silent forms of rural nature, and which I am half ashamed I do not have with men, and with towns and cities.[30]

But he was only *half* ashamed of this, and would relinquish his companionship for nothing that could be offered in exchange:

I do not go to Nature to be taught. I go for enjoyment — companionship.[31]

It was April, his birth-month, that brought some of the most thrilling moments to this intercourse:

It is enough to bask there in the sunlight — on the ground beside them [arbutus], drinking in their odor, feasting the eye on their tints and forms, hearing the April breezes sigh and murmur in the pines or hemlock near you, living in a present fragrant with the memory of other days. Lying there, half dreaming, half observing, if you are not in communion with the very soul of spring, then there is a want of soul in you.[32]

I... fairly bask in the spirit of April. I see her glance in the full, clear, happy streams, in the greening patches in the meadows, and hear her voice in the calls and songs of the mating birds.... An hour's walk, hand in hand with April.[33]

His relation to his Beloved was not merely passive:

I have thoughts that follow the migrating fowls northward and southward, and that go with the seabirds into the desert of the ocean, lonely and tireless as they. I sympathize with the watchful

crow perched yonder on that tree, or walking about the fields. I hurry outdoors when I hear the clarion of the wild gander; his comrade in my heart sends back the call.[34]

Seated upon my raft and slowly carried by the current or drifted by the breeze, I had many a long, silent look into the face of the wilderness, and found the communion good. I was alone with the spirit of the forest-bound lakes, and felt its presence and magnetism. I played hide-and-seek with it about the nooks and corners, and lay in wait for it upon a little island crowned with a clump of trees that was moored just to one side the current near the head of the lake.[35]

As one having authority, he tells us the secret of successful communion, which again reveals his sensitivity:

I do not stand in my own light. I am pure spirit, pure feeling, and get very close to bird and beast. My thin skin lets shy and delicate influences pass. I can surrender myself to Nature without effort.[36]

Several passages proclaim the ardent lover of Nature:

I have loved the feel of the grass under my feet, and the sound of running streams by my side. The hum of the wind in the tree-tops has always been music to me, and the face of the fields has often comforted me more than the faces of men. I am in love with this world; by my constitution I have nestled lovingly in it.[37]

What is my love for Nature? Spiritual or material? I do not love her at a distance, or look on and admire her. I lay my heart to hers. I melt into her moods, I drain her of her secrets and meet her with passion and warmth. The soul's passion? Maybe, yet it seems to me the whole of me, body, soul, and mind, is abandoned to her.[38]

He is a wise lover, as well as passionate:

To interpret Nature is not to improve upon her; it is to draw her out; it is to have an emotional intercourse with her, absorb her, and reproduce her tinged with the colors of the spirit.[39]

Clifford Bax has finely said that mysticism is the romance of religion, and surely there is romance a-plenty in these expressions!

There can be hypocrisy in Nature-religion, and our lover is keenly alive to this strain in pseudo-pantheists:

It will not do in literature to compliment Nature and make love to her by open profession and declaration: you must show your love by your deeds or your spirit, and by the sincerity of your service to her.[40]

Let us reverently observe him a few moments in the act of worship:

O, spring is marvelous! How my life goes out and up these joyous days! To-day I worshiped in the mountains. The birds sang my psalms and the rocks preached my sermons.[41]

Every walk through the woods is a religious rite, every bath in the stream is a saving ordinance. Communion service is at all hours, and the bread and wine are from the heart and marrow of Mother Earth.[42]

I cannot tell what the simple apparition of the earth and sky mean to me; I think that at rare intervals one sees that they have an immense spiritual meaning, altogether unspeakable.[43]

Of the song of the hermit thrush:

This song appeals to the sentiment of the beautiful in me, and suggests a serene religious beatitude as no other sound in nature does.... It... seems to be the voice of that calm, sweet solemnity one attains to in his best moments. It realizes a peace and a deep, solemn joy that only the finest souls may know.... Mounting toward the upland again, I pause reverently as the hush and stillness of twilight comes upon the woods. It is the sweetest, ripest hour of the day. And as the hermit's evening hymn goes up from the deep solitude below me, I experience that serene exaltation of sentiment of which music, literature and religion are but faint types and symbols.[44]

As to the mystic's forsaking of lesser loves, and withdrawal from the world, we may recall that one of Burroughs's favorite sonnets was Wordsworth's 'The world is too much with us.' [45] He did feel evil in the life of his day, and expressed himself in strong language about it:

I look upon this craze for wealth that possesses

nearly all classes in our time as one of the most lamentable spectacles the world has ever seen.[46]

Life in this country is undoubtedly the ugliest and most materialistic that any country or age ever saw. Our civilisation is the noisiest and most disquieting, and the pressure of the business and industrial spirit the most maddening and killing that the race has yet experienced.[47]

In two of the foregoing references (Notes 30 and 37), Burroughs indicates his discovery of something far more precious than human intercourse, although he enjoyed that intercourse. We must not forget that one of his nicknames was 'Man Not Afraid of Company,' as we see him hiding himself away in wood and mountain. In 'Expression,' he had spoken of the imperious claim of the divine urge which had come to him in his youth:

Neither wife, nor friends nor fortune nor appetite should call one from his work when he is possessed by this spirit and can utter his thought. We are caught up into these regions rarely enough, let us not come down till we are obliged.[48]

Here is an autobiographical note:

Solitude is a severe test of a man, but it is no doubt necessary to insure deep and fast colors of the spirit. Those who are most alone are most like themselves.[49]

Dr. Barrus says of him, and others like him, 'They literally went away that they might come to us

in a closer, truer way than had they tarried in our midst.' [50]

From the beginning and close of John Burroughs's life we choose two strongly mystical passages with which to end this chapter. The first, written at twenty-two is very like a passage from Thomas Traherne. Although speaking of the scholar, the young man's own experience is here revealed:

Everything he looks upon is flooded with exhaustless meaning and beauty, and to his eyes the landscape seems waiting and ready to float away into the upper heavens. Facts and clods become transparent; the walls of his own being become clear as glass, and he seems to see through the very pores of his skin. The laws of Nature that shoot and radiate like great nerves throughout the universe, making every part vital and related to the whole, come out beneath his penetrating vision. His senses are sharpened and refined, and he hears musical sounds in the air, sees signs and signals in the earth, 'sermons in stones, and running brooks,' and meaning everywhere.[51]

The authentic mystical note is still sounded in his last volume:

So many persons are disappointed in life! They have false aims. They have wanted something for nothing. They have listened to the call of ambition and have not heeded the inner light.[52]

CHAPTER V

'AT SEA'

So far, we have been engaged with John Burroughs's religious experience; we have traced its development, noting especially the strong influence of Emerson, Wordsworth, and Whitman. The time is ripe for us to inquire into his theoretical evaluation of this experience; for however much he criticized organized Christianity for manufacturing dogmas and theologies, like all other men he was bound to make interpretations of his soundings in the eternal ocean of the Spirit. The next question, therefore, is, What did John Burroughs think about his spiritual experience?

Having seen him in reverent and ecstatic communion with Nature, a communion expressed in his most beautiful passages, it is disconcerting to hear him doubt the reality of these sacred moments. In any case, he doubted their validity. He wrote that the mystics do not hear God in the silence, but their own souls,[1] and expressed the same conviction in a setting more native to himself:

> You commune with your own soul, not with woods or waters; they furnish the conditions, and are what you make them.[2]

His position was explained more fully in a passage from his journal:

We talk of communing with Nature, but 'tis with ourselves we commune. Nature has nothing to say. It all comes from within.... Nature furnishes the conditions — the solitude — and the soul furnishes the entertainment. The 'something far more deeply interfused' is interfused then and there by the beholder. All lovers of Nature are lovers of solitude, and hence of themselves. They muse and dream and commune with themselves. They interpret themselves, not Nature. She reflects their own thoughts and moods. You find in Nature what you bring to her.... The religious soul finds Nature very religious.[3]

It is a devastation of spirit to doubt life's most precious experiences, and it is not surprising that Burroughs suffered a nostalgia, a 'homesickness which home could not cure,'[4] which he admitted to be 'almost a disease.'[5] His biographer writes of 'a vague, yearning homesickness' which ever possessed him, and this is found throughout his writings. In 'My Boyhood' he exclaims: 'If the earth and the sky are enough for one, why should one sigh for other spheres?'[6] but he did sigh, and it is not quite true to speak of his 'creedless, but an absolute and joyous faith.'[7]

At forty he made this journal entry:

[Fortune] has exceeded my expectations fourfold, and 'yet I am not happy.'[8]

And:

I walk out into the country and over the hills and along the roads with long, sad thoughts. What does my heart crave? I don't know....[9]

Nearly thirty years later he is still writing of 'the soul's homesickness.'[10] This nostalgia centered in his family, his old home, and the past, and expresses itself with a piercing wistfulness that is almost morbid in a man hardly of middle age: 'Ah! the Past! the Past has such a hold on me!'[11]

We cannot attribute his melancholy to indigestion, nor can too much responsibility be laid for it at the door of his Welsh and Irish ancestors. The critic who said it was 'the expression of an unfulfilled longing for spiritual attainment,'[12] was echoing Burroughs's own interpretation — 'the soul's thirst can never be slaked.'[13] His uncertainty in interpreting his spiritual experience made him ever-restlessly seek a home for his soul, and his melancholy, intermittent though it was, was a natural concomitant of his hopeless quest.

Those who think that pantheism means life in a rose-garden and an easy acceptance of the universe, should ponder the case of John Burroughs. Pantheism, as Mr. Middleton Murry says,[14] means accepting one's experience, both pleasant and painful. It cannot be said but that Burroughs's lines fell in pleasant places, but even

then he could not accept his experience. One of his volumes is 'Accepting the Universe,' and this he tried to do, but there were some aspects of it against which his soul rebelled.

There was the authentic mystical strain in Burroughs, but one of the traits of the mystic he did not possess: an unswerving singlemindedness. He was continuously halting between two opinions. The strand in his thinking represented by Emerson and Wordsworth was in violent contrast to that represented by Darwin. This scientific strain has not heretofore been stressed, for obvious reasons, but it is important to realize that science possessed a strong fascination for him. He saw religion and science in bitter conflict, and, deeply intrigued by them both, inclined to believe that science would come out the victor. He was not able to accept Whitman's care-free solution of the problem: 'I say the whole earth, and all the stars of the sky, are for Religion's sake.' [15] He was an exception to the rule that every one is born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian, for he paid homage to both schools of thought, with the scales slightly weighted in the Platonic direction. He says in this connection: 'I have had a good deal of trouble in trying to make my inborn idealism go hand in hand with my inborn naturalism.' [16] He never came to see that the apparent antagonism between the quantitative and the qualitative approaches to the uni-

verse was unreal; the result of an arrogant science and a frightened religion.

We find him writing: 'Theology and science... will not mix much better than oil and water,' [17] only to reply to himself: 'Faith and science must indeed go hand in hand.' [18]

He feels sometimes that nothing is real except what science can underwrite as material fact, and in these mechanistic moods contends that mind is the result of the molecular changes in the brain:

> Can we find that inner world, or any clue to it, by dissecting the brain? Has it, therefore, any reality except in our imagination? [19]

Then he will rebel against the scientific inevitable:

> Probably the soul, and all that pertains to it, has a physical or physiological explanation, but how inadequate it seems in face of all we feel and think and dream and aspire to! [20]

Here is his statement of the impasse:

> In short, the truth of this whole controversy between science and theology seems to me to be this: If we take science as our sole guide, if we accept and hold fast that alone which is verifiable, the old theology, with all its miraculous machinery, must go. But if there is a higher principle by which we are to be guided in religious matters, if there is an eye of faith which is superior to the eye of reason — a proposition which I here neither affirm nor deny — then the whole aspect of the question is changed, and it is science and not theology that is blocking the way.[21]

We know now that both science and theology were blocking the way!

We can understand his position, for he lived when he could still speak of the 'Great trilogy of sciences' as Astronomy, Geology, and Biology,[22] and of 'gross matter.' [23] Since that time Psychology has reared its head with all the arrogance of the Great Trilogy, but maturity will bring humility, as it has in their case. Physics has entered what might be termed 'faery' realms since 'Time and Change' was penned. Those were the days when men spoke despairingly of 'the weary weight of the material universe,' [24] while at the present time we are confused by the wild masquerade of the electrons. It was with great joy that Burroughs watched advanced physics revealing the ethereal aspects of matter:

> This gross matter seems ever ready to vanish into the transcendental. When the new physics is done with it, what is there left but spirit, or something akin to it? [25]

In his preface to 'The Breath of Life,' a late book, he is pleased that the new conception of matter stands near to idealism, or even mysticism.

He was driven to defend science against the well-founded charge of materialism in 'In the Noon of Science,' originally entitled 'The Chill of Science'; [26] and elsewhere dressed her in the robes of lowliness:

Perhaps I may say that (science) cannot give the ultimate explanation of anything.[27]

He even went so far as to claim for science more than she could ever promise or perform:

The final value of physical science is its capability to foster in us noble ideals, and to lead us to new and larger views of moral and spiritual truths. The extent to which it is able to do this measures its value to the spirit....[28]

To use philosophical jargon, Burroughs's problem was the perennial one of facts and values; he could not make a place for values in the universe he knew. He said many times that there could be found in Nature neither pagan nor Christian virtues, but a non-moral activity. This was true from either pole of his thinking, pantheistic or mechanistic. Truth enslaved him, as we have seen, and he sacrificed much for it, but he made the common error of confusing scientific facts with Truth. This can be seen in such phrases as 'the objective truth of science,' and 'the subjective truth of poetry, morals and religion.'[29] Hence his fear that if religion could be explained, it would die![30] At a later day he referred to Truth as an 'experience of the human mind,'[31] and therefore 'subjective.' His second error — common to the scientific viewpoint — was to stress Truth as though it were the only value, to the detriment of Beauty and Goodness, both equally valid approaches to the universe.

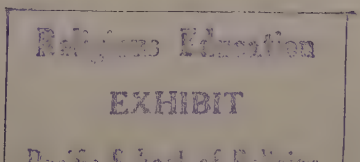
This rather naïve handling of philosophical questions reveals his weakness — the need of a philosophy to interpret his spiritual experience. 'Without metaphysics we can do nothing,' he once wrote,[32] and one wonders if he were not sensing his own need in these words:

> Poor, indeed, is the man who has no philosophy, no commanding outlook over the tangles and contradictions of the world of sense.[33]

No religious structure can endure without a philosophical foundation, and his never had the stability he craved. Here is a paradox, that from his boyhood John Burroughs was philosophically inclined, but the lack of a philosophy was the root of his soul's unrest. He called himself a pantheist, under the influence of Emerson, Wordsworth, and Whitman, and was therefore inconsistent in his admiration of Carlyle, who had a clear-cut sense of the antithetic nature of good and evil. On the other hand, he was for many years harassed by a 'dreary agnostic materialism,' [34] and the Carlyle in him rebelled again:

> There is no ethics in the physical order, and if humanity is in the grip of that order, where do moral obligations come in?[35]

It was Bergson, with his philosophy of the *élan vital*, whom he had anticipated by some fifty years, who partially resolved this inner conflict. It is significant that he dubbed him 'The Prophet of


Religious Education
EXHIBIT

the Soul,' and, straddling between pantheism and materialism, we can almost hear him heave a grateful sigh:

> We may say of Bergson that he is the friend and aider of those who would see with the spirit and enter into the mystery of creation through intellectual sympathy or intuition, instead of making the vain attempt to do so through the logical and scientific understanding.[36]

It is strange that his spiritual hunger should not have found satisfaction in Eucken, with his philosophy of the 'Spiritual Life,' but his work seemed not to attract him.[37] It may have been because Eucken is rather like a tiring preacher, while Bergson is alert and scintillating.

> In reading it I am in the concrete world of life, bathed in the light of the highest heaven of thought. It exhilarates me like a bath in the stream, or a walk on the hills,[38]

says he of 'Creative Evolution.' Dr. Barrus suggests that Bergson did for him in his later years what Whitman did for him in his youth.[39] He said that the Frenchman did for him what Wordsworth did for John Stuart Mill, and he told Bergson to his face that as Emerson was the inspiration of his youth, so he was the inspiration of his old age.[40] However, Bergson was not able completely to solve his philosophical problem, and before his death Burroughs discounted some of the

French savant's conclusions, and fell back into his old materialistic mood.

He was prepared to call himself an agnostic, and we may take this to be his prevailing intellectual climate — he 'didn't know.' This did not prevent him from being extremely dogmatic, however, as we shall see later! Speaking for himself, he says:

> [The agnostic] is not a stranger to the thrill of awe and reverence in the presence of the great mystery of the universe; but all propositions relative to the plans, ways, and nature of that mystery that are not verifiable, he fights shy of.[41]

But like Spencer, and the orthodox, too, he was prepared to give a somewhat definite account of the Unknowable, although he freely confesses:

> No doubt I often think I have reached the bottom of the great questions, when I have only reached the length of my plummet-line.[42]

Against this background of philosophical uncertainty, which is agnosticism, let us trace the theological construction which Burroughs put upon the facts of his spiritual experience.

CHAPTER VI

'THE FAITH OF A NATURALIST'

RELIGION

ONE of the most penetrating observations on religion came from the pen of the 'Seer of Slabsides':

> Often those who have it most have it least, and those who have it least, have it most.[1]

He sorted out the truly religious from the pretenders with a sure hand:

> In most theological treatises it is absent. Lincoln is a truly religious soul. Beecher is not. It is by no means common among the clergy. The Biblical writers are the most full of it of all others. Indeed, here is its great deep, its primordial ocean... none of the new poets in England, or America, possess a deep high seriousness which goes with the religious sense.[2]

He was convinced that real religion was a rarity:

> It is not a universal gift; truly religious natures are as rare as poetic and artistic natures; there is a gleam or touch of it in most persons, but it is fully developed in but few... the great mass of the well-behaved, church-going people are not deeply or truly religious... in the great army of clergymen there is only here and there a deeply religious nature.[3]

He felt strongly about the selfish, prudential re-

ligion that was rife in his day, and two quotations will represent many:

'Come and do business for eternity,' says a camp-meeting pastor, and it struck the right note. Religion, with the masses, is a kind of business transaction in which they drive sharp bargains with God, and seek to cheat the Devil out of his due. It is not so much the love of God that moves them, as fear for the safety of their own bacon. They invest in the heavenly securities because they expect big dividends by and by. It is a matter of worldly prudence and nothing more.[4]

To a correspondent who felt that belief in a hereafter was a necessary bolster to virtue, he wrote as late as 1917:

Without stopping to refute your charge that I deny God and a spiritual life, and so forth, let me ask if you are on the side of virtue, love, honor, and all the nobler human qualities because you expect to be rewarded in the future, or punished if you are not on their side. Do you find these things of no value in themselves? Do they not pay even if you take a merely commercial view of the question? Do they not in themselves contribute to the happiness and well-being of mankind? Have they not a real foundation in the needs of our life in this world? A man who is good and honorable because he expects to be paid for it in some future state of existence, I have little use for.

His description of true religion includes the usual side-swipe at creeds:

A person is not religious just because he has

a definite scheme of theology. He may have that and be entirely lacking in æsthetic and moral sensitiveness. The lover of nature and of the good and beautiful is the truly religious man, and you find such in every church and outside of any church.[5]

The importance of religion is an axiom with him:

Religion... is a spiritual flowering, and the man who has it not is like a plant that never blooms.[6]

I am convinced that no man's life is complete without some kind of an emotional experience that may be called religious.[7]

When man ceases to feel, in some measure, the mystery and spirituality of the universe, and the presence of a power in which we live, and move, and have our being, he will have reversed his history and gone backward instead of forward.[8]

The permanency of religion was a matter about which he could not make up his mind. He makes several statements like this:

The religious thrill, the sense of the Infinite, the awe and mystery of the universe, is, no doubt, permanent in the race, but all expression of it in creeds and forms... is transient and flitting, like the leaves of the trees.[9]

He then reverses his judgment thus:

Man has undoubtedly passed through and finished certain phases of his emotional and mental development. He will never again be the

religious enthusiast and fanatic he has been in the past; he has not worshiped his last, but he has worshiped his best.... His religion as such is on the wane. But his humanitarianism is a rising tide.[10]

When Burroughs claims that 'the world is saved by morality, not religion,' [11] we should realize that by religion in this instance he is thinking of forms and creeds, but uncertainty does lurk here, and is due to his conviction that religion is 'subjective' as he called it, and does not provide a key to the meaning of the universe:

Religion is subjective, an emotion, a feeling, an aspiration of the soul; science is objective and rests on demonstration.[12]

But, subjective or objective, he knew full well the true heart of religion:

The perfect flower of religion opens in the soul only when all self-seeking is abandoned.'[13]

He also knows the fruit of it:

Does your religion help toward a larger and freer life, toward more goodwill and tolerance, toward a keener appreciation of the world in which we are placed, toward a wider outlook and deeper and saner human relations? [14]

This last passage indicates his attitude to religion in its relation to life. He expects religion to affect life powerfully, although it made him somewhat of a solitary, as it has made many others. He complains that because religion has not permeated

it, modern life is not even moral.[15] His view of the living value of religion is well expressed in the following passage:

> The first step towards making a man manly is to convince him he has a capacity for manliness. Show him that religion is not some far-away thing that he must get, but a vital truth which he lives whenever he does a worthy thing.[16]

The World War somewhat shook Burroughs's confidence in the power of Christianity, as it did that of many others. Before that horror, he had been convinced that Christianity as a true system of ethics was a success,[17] and that it produces the highest type of personality.[18] He felt it had been a tremendous power in elevating the peoples of Europe;[19] but after the conflict he regarded Christianity, as it affects international relations, as a mere whitewash.[20]

Although Christianity is the religion which claimed most of his attention, he stated that all religions were of equal value, if one thought in terms of the good they accomplished in their devotees. It mattered not so much what one believed, as how earnestly he believed it. This conviction was something else the War swept away, for we discover in his journal this very inconsistent yell of triumph:

> The Hun had capitulated. Glory to God!—not to the Hun's God, but to the Christian God of the Allies![21]

His inconsistency also showed itself in his eagerness to divest organized Christianity of its useless theological trappings. The fact is, he knew in his heart of hearts that it does matter what a man believes, and he valued religion so highly that he felt called to a crusade against religious shams and creedal superfluities.

His own religion he called 'natural' religion — a faith without a bribe, calling for the sterner virtues as well as the gentler graces. It has its own attractiveness:

> There are no heretics in Nature's church; all are believers, all are communicants. The beauty of natural religion is that you have it all the time. ... The crickets chirp it, the birds sing it, the breezes chant it, the thunder proclaims it, the streams murmur it, the unaffected man lives it. Its incense rises from the plowed fields, it is on the morning breeze, it is in the forest breath and in the spray of the wave.... It is not an insurance policy underwritten by a bishop or a priest; it is not even a faith; it is a love, an enthusiasm, a consecration to natural truth.[22]

Can there be anything more religious than the nature-love Burroughs had observed in Emerson and Wordsworth, and felt in his own life?

> Joy in the universe, and keen curiosity about it all — that has been my religion. As I grow old, my joy and my interest in it increases.[23]

GOD

John Burroughs's idea of God has been anticipated by our survey of his views on religion. Sometimes, his God is vague in outline, and sometimes concrete, depending on whether the mood is pantheistic or materialistic. However, either mood depersonalizes the universe, and we need look for no Father-God in his theology, as visualized by the Church. A list of titles used by Burroughs to express his idea will convey a fair impression: God, Providence, Over-Soul, Universal Mind, Omnipotent Intelligence, Creator, Primal Cause, Original Push, Principle of Life, Infinite Power, Creative Energy, Universal Beneficence, and the All. Obviously, this plenitude in expressing the Inexpressible reveals a poverty of definition which is usual in agnosticism. In his eighty-third year he says that he offers his books to the 'Unknown and Unknowable God.' [24]

In another letter written in 1917 he says:

I do not believe in a personal God any more than I believe in a personal Devil... I myself have no definite conception of God. He is simply the Unnameable, the Infinite Mystery to which everything refers.

In the last century they felt the need of a Creator more than to-day, and Burroughs shared this need:

Creation by chemistry and mechanics is as mysterious as creation by miracle. We must still

have a Creator while we can do nothing with him, or find any place for him in an endless, beginningless, infinite series of events.[25]

The universe as a divine thought appeals to him:

From the finite or human point of view we feel compelled to say some vaster being or intelligence must have had the thought of all these things from the beginning or before the beginning.[26]

Nevertheless, he demands:

Let me define God in my own terms, as the active vital principle of the universe, without which nothing is, or can be, then I agree with the God-makers.[27]

And again:

I cannot define God to myself in terms of human personality.[28]

This was ground from which he would not be moved; he never lost an opportunity of expressing his contempt of 'anthropomorphism.' In the letter to the prudential correspondent, already quoted on page 55 occur these words:

It is only the God which you make in your own image, and with more than your own cruelty and short-sightedness, that I deny. The God that I see in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, the God that is identified with the whole universe, is the God whose ways to man I have no trouble in justifying...

He overdid this attack, and in these days of 'relativity' some of the things he said would sound

naïve. It never seemed to occur to the scientific world of the last century, that a soulless, mechanistic universe is doubly anthropomorphic. 'Mechanomorphism,' as Canon Streeter calls it, is open to all the charges made against anthropomorphism and more. In this matter of the nature of Reality, Burroughs refused to be tied by his own logic. He writes:

> [Man's] moral and spiritual nature, his altruism, his veneration, his religious emotions, his æsthetic perceptions — have come to him as a man, supplementing his lower nature, as it were, with another order of senses.... The father of the eye is the light, and the father of the ear is the vibration of the air, but the father of man's higher nature is a question of quite another sort.[29]

These are strange words from the man who laid so much stress on analogy at the opening of his literary career! But he might say this was a case of false analogy. And yet even on this point, we find a passage like this:

> Your real lover of nature... does not know what it is that draws him. It is not beauty, any more than it is beauty in his father and mother that makes him love them. It is 'something far more deeply interfused,' something *native*, and *kindred* that calls him.[30] [Italics mine.]

The Divine immanence was a living reality to him — he rejoiced in it:

> How childish this talk is, that we can be nearer God, nearer heaven, in some other world, than we

are here! what irreligion and atheism it is! The child in its mother's womb is no nearer its mother than you and I and all men are *at all times* near God. Does not the Book say, 'In him we live, and move, and have our being'? This is the literal truth, whoever says it, or denies it.[31]

He illustrated his point in comments on the death of Cardinal Manning:

He was firmly possessed with the Christian [*sic*] idea that he was about to go from a place where God is not, to a place where God is and abides....[32]

He called the universe 'the living integument' of God, and one feels that he continually sensed its aliveness:

The universe alive, the veritable body of God, the organism of a vast, mysterious, all-embracing power, impersonal, unhuman in its general workings, but manifesting conscience and beneficence mainly through the human race.[33]

His pantheism is implicit here, but fully expressed in such passages as:

Everything is of God, and for God, and by God.... You and I are a part of God in a literal sense.[34]

His pantheism also accounts for some rather startling expressions, like 'God is no more a god than man is,' [35] and 'Man is as good as God.' [36] Suggesting that matter and spirit are one,[37] he calls himself 'an out and out pantheist,' [38] and in

this mood divinizes everything. But the shade of materialism is ever at hand with its 'cosmic chill,' and, paradoxically, he dehumanizes everything after the manner of modern humanism. Thus he writes that 'some men are a good deal better than God,' [39] and that 'man is himself the only God.' [40] These disturbing statements are simply crisp expressions of philosophical theories, for Burroughs had little patience with wordy obscurity. In his view, the Eternal has no love for mankind in a parental sense, but in relation to man is like a general over his army.[41] To put it another way, the Eternal is no more conscious of the lives of men than we are of the operation of our body cells.[42]

If the careless anthropomorphism of the orthodox annoyed him, it is no exaggeration to say that the love of the miraculous enraged him, and he went out of his way to emphasize the supreme unconcern of the universe with human affairs. He writes of: 'The leprosy of the miraculous which taints men's minds,' [43] and is profoundly thankful for a universe of inexorable law, as are all thinking people:

> It is a greater consolation to me to know that the universe is governed by unalterable laws than that it is subject to any capricious and changeable will. I like to know that what we call God is without variableness or shadow of turning. We know what to depend on.[44]

Miracles for man's benefit cannot occur because the universe is not soft-hearted:

> The great wheels go round just the same whether they are crushing the man or the corn for his bread. It is all one to the Eternal.... Nature is not benevolent; Nature is just.... And in the end is not this best? Could the universe be run as a charity or benevolent institution, or as a poorhouse of the most approved pattern?[45]

We are now in the territory usually associated with prayer, and will consider Burroughs's position on the subject:

> Prayer is practically a belief in miracles — a belief that the world is not governed by immutable law, but that God may be persuaded, or stirred up, to step out of his way to do what he would not otherwise do.[46]

In this sense, he felt that answers to prayer were purely subjective:

> The answer to prayer rises within the soul itself. The answer is already within you; the heat of prayer calls it to the surface and makes you conscious of it,[47]

or else the result of a 'general providence.'[48] If there is good in prayer at all, it is the subjective blessing of faith:

> Prayer is a good thing for those who can have faith and pray in all sincerity; they shall surely be blessed. All sincere belief tends evermore to fulfill itself.... Whatever begets enthusiasm and warms the soul up, as sincere prayer often does is a blessing.[49]

For himself, he never prayed,[50] and for this reason:

'The best prayers,' says Joubert, 'are those which have nothing distinct, and which thus partake of adoration.' The wisest man cannot pray, has no need of prayer, because his whole life is an aspiration toward, and a desire for, the supreme good of the world.[51]

Of course, the common view of prayer as alms-begging at the gate of Heaven, still unfortunately held by many, was a fair target for his shafts, as it is for any spiritual mind, but even the higher prayer of adoration and communion could find no place in Burroughs's universe, for there was nobody to adore in any way that would lead to communion of spirit with Spirit. At the same time, while there was no place for prayer in his theology, we must not overlook the fact that he frequently had communion with 'Nature.' In this, his practice bettered his profession.

His belief in an impersonal, inapprehensible deity never satisfied him, especially as it raised the tremendous problem of the appearance of man, and those values which are summed in the term 'soul':

Of course, no deductions of science can satisfy our longings for something kindred to our own spirits in the universe.... Is this longing only the result of our inevitable anthropomorphism, or is it the evidence of things unseen, the substance of things hoped for, the prophecy of our kinship with the farthest star? Can soul arise out of a soulless universe? [52]

MAN

'Can soul arise out of a soulless universe?' That question introduces the problem of Man, equally great with the problem of God. John Burroughs never made up his mind what to do with the human race in an impersonal habitat. To-day, he might be told that he had no need to do anything with it, any more than he had need to do anything with any other patch in the universal quilt. But in those days, he could say in Emersonian fashion that being 'in tune with the Infinite' means being in tune with your better self,[53] and every school of thought knew very definitely what he meant. In a behaviorist decade, however, that sort of statement would be the opening move in an uncertain psychological game played under individualist rules.

Sometimes he felt that man is an accident in the universe,[54] which is a very simple solution involving very complex metaphysical results. He asks questions requiring a pessimistic negative:

> Is consciousness a part of the universe? or only one of the phenomena of matter? If it ceases, is anything lost? [55]

When he was twenty-eight his journal received this opinion:

> Nature exists no more for man than she does for monkeys, and is as regardless of his life or pleasure or success as she is of fleas.[56]

He held a similar view later in life:

> Man thinks himself at the top, and that the immense display and prodigality of Nature are for him. But they are no more for him than they are for the birds and beasts, and he is no more at the top than they are.[57]

And still later:

> How curious it is that man in his enormous egotism has made himself believe that he is some exceptional product; that he has a special and extra, or supernatural, endowment — a soul — and that to bring him forth has been the aim and object of all creation![58]

On the other hand, throughout life he adhered to the divinity of man. Thus:

> Wisdom, love, mercy, justice, are human attributes. We call them divine, and it is well, but they do not exist outside of man.[59]

But he also spoke of the universe as 'manifesting conscience and beneficence mainly through the human race,'[60] and so claiming man as an integral part of Nature. The same thought is expressed almost twenty years later:

> I can see no intelligence, or love, akin to our own, at work in the universe. Yet where did man's love and intelligence come from? He, too, is a part of Nature.[61]

In his pantheistic elevation he says very definitely: 'Man is a part of the whole system of things; he is not an alien, nor an accident, nor an interloper,'[62]

and asks a question requiring an optimistic affirmative: 'Is not man himself a manifestation of God?' [63] But why does he write, in view of this: 'All men are *approximately* divine'? [64] [Italics mine.] He feels that: 'The whole order of the universe favors virtue and is against vice,' [65] a verdict which would by no means be accepted by his modern representatives. It is significant that one of his 'Ruminations,' written toward the close of his life, is entitled, 'Man a part of Nature.' [66]

We have already heard him suggest that the mechanistic theory of mind is the correct one, and pour scorn on the idea of 'soul,' but we should remember his demands for the soul in an earlier chapter, and his appraisal of literature according to its spirituality. Speculating over a biological phenomenon, he is overheard musing on animistic lines:

> That the cell life should continue after the soul life has ceased is very significant. It seems a legitimate inference from this fact that the human body is the organ or instrument of some agent that is not the body.[67]

Even if man has no soul, as he felt in some desolate moments, he shows signs of one:

> The flowering of man's spiritual nature is as natural and evolutionary as the opening of a rose or a morning glory.[68]

He even allowed himself to say that the 'soul is

infinite'![69] It is the spiritual aspect of man which gives hope for the future:

> [Man's] complete physical evolution must have been achieved thousands of centuries ago, but his full mental and spiritual evolution is not yet.[70]

> A mental and spiritual evolution is going on, and depths beneath depths will open in the course of time.[71]

Burroughs was convinced that the race has had a terrible past behind it, and before it a future of increasing splendor. He felt that 'optimism is a final trait of the Eternal.'[72] In spite of these expressions of high hope, a doubt would creep in as to human destiny. This doubt would become so strong that he expected the race to be snuffed out with the planet, in which case both the genesis and destruction of man would be to the glory of God, if the glory of God be conceived of in a large enough manner.[73] Nevertheless, man is worth preservation, and his spiritual intimations should be reënforced:

> Making all due acknowledgments to science, there is one danger attending it... the danger that science, absorbed with its great problems, will forget Man.... The heart has been disenchanted by having disclosed to it blind, abstract forces where it had enthroned personal humanistic divinities.... The poet must come to the rescue, and place man again at the top, magnify him, exalt him, reënforce him, and match these

wonders from without with equal wonders from within.[74]

It is noticeable that more than once Burroughs appeals to the poets for human salvation, and not to priest or preacher. This point will be taken up later, but what he meant by salvation must be mentioned here. Both materialism and pantheism present an unmoral universe, as Burroughs realized, and therefore can give no reality to evil. It is only the logical conclusion that this is the best of all possible worlds, as he held. He did once remark, in an essay with Browning's phrase as title: 'To our moral sentiment... all is not right with the world,' [75] but he was not willing to trust the moral sentiment in that regard. While it might be going too far to say that he treated evil casually, he did not take it seriously in his thinking. He felt that sin is another name for imperfection, and is a necessary stage in our development.[76]

> Reason sees that evil is only a shadow of good ... while every effort is to be made to remedy it, we are not to regard it as something foreign to us.[77]

Sin could have no large significance, of course, in Burroughs's impersonal universe: 'We need not fear alienation from God'; [78] for our sins are simply against each other.

Any remedy for evil must, in the nature of the case, spring out of man's own efforts. Salvation for Burroughs is a system of self-help inspired

by the writings of the poets and philosophers, to save men to their better selves. This is the usual agnostic position, which has been given classic expression in the teachings of Gautama and Confucius.

'If natural goodness will not save a man, he is lost,' [79] says Burroughs, which simply means that multitudes will be lost, for they are not naturally good. This is predestination with a vengeance! Salvation by Jesus Christ, in Burroughs's interpretation, is salvation by Jesus's way of life. But salvation by works was not Burroughs's own experience, and it was his faith in the spirituality of Nature, as he communed with her by river and hill, that saved him from his lower self.

How perverse the mentality which will ignore the graces and achievements of a valuable life, and be horrified by a humble agnosticism on the highly abstruse subject of immortality! Burroughs's view of this matter will have been anticipated because of his uncertain valuation of man, but his actual words are worth quotation. The doctrine of immortality expresses in a finite way man's infinite worth, and of this infinite worth Burroughs was not wholly convinced. He could see nothing embryonic in the nature of man which points to further development, but felt that 'Death is a redistribution of type,' [80] and therefore the cessation of personal existence. He knew full well that reason was not the key to unlock this door:

The moment you go into the court of reason with this case, you are non-suited. There is no ground to go upon. It is entirely a matter of faith.[81]

But he could not muster this faith:

Professor DuBois's article on Immortality in last 'Century' seems pretty conclusive. It is very ingenious and does not assume the points to be proven. Yet why does it not produce conviction in me? Surely not because I do not want to be convinced.[82]

He tried to light his candle at Whitman's 'great torch,' but in vain. In middle life, when it was very dark before the Bergsonian dawn, he wrote in ruthless impatience:

Immortality is something to be reasoned about and proven, is it? a question to be established by a subtle metaphysical argument? Then away with it, and away with all such questions![83]

Yet, at the end of his life he was still wistful:

I wish there was something to light up the grave for me, but there is not.[84]

Dr. Barrus tells of a wistfulness in his face during his last days, as of a child going alone into a dark room: 'There might be a light beyond—he hoped there was.'[85] But this brought him little solace: here his spiritual 'slabsides' let in the wintry blast. He tried to accept the universe, but the disciple could not follow his master to the very end, for

Whitman's dying confidence was: 'It's all right, John, it's all right.'

The sort of immortality Burroughs expected was a diffusion of his elements and qualities through the universe:

> I shall be diffused in great Nature, in the soil, in the air, in the sunshine, in the hearts of those who love me, in all the living and flowing currents of the world, though I may never again in my entirety be embodied in a single human being. My elements and my forces go back into the original sources out of which they came, and these sources are perennial in this vast, wonderful, divine cosmos.[86]

CHAPTER VII

'THE DECADENCE OF THEOLOGY'

MOST of us feel a morbid fascination in attacks on the Church, and in order to satisfy the curiosity which is responsible for it, we may well spend a few moments watching John Burroughs disport himself in the cathedral of organized Christianity. Occasionally, he is wilful in smashing a few prized windows with the abandon of a high-spirited schoolboy, but in general, we must admit, even when not in agreement with him, that he is respectful at the right time. After all, it is a sign of life to be irritated by fashions and forms that are uselessly antique, and members of the Church herself have expressed this healthy dissatisfaction.

JESUS

John Burroughs's attitude to the Founder of Christianity was one of deepest respect; in fact, he was more respectful than some New Testament students of the present day. His biographer says that Jesus's name was always uttered in a reverent tone. The fascinating Galilean, familiar to-day through the long, and sometimes courageous, labors of modern scholarship, was undiscovered through the greater part of Burroughs's life; had

he been disinterred earlier, worship might have enriched reverence. One can imagine him enjoying the interpretations of Glover and Middleton Murry, while sickened by Papini's excesses, and lamenting the lack of poetry and 'spirituality' in Shirley Jackson Case! At the same time, he did well in anticipating the modern viewpoint, and saw clearly that the Christian problem is historical, and reduces to a sifting and interpretation of documents.[1]

The background is obvious in this early sentence from 'Expression':

> Absolute life we can have no conception of; the absolute must come down and incarnate itself in the conditioned, and cease to be absolute, before it comes within the plane of our knowledge.[2]

So, many years later, he said that if God were to appear he probably would come as Jesus did.[3] Today, not so many people would be shocked as were when he first contended that the birth-stories are legend rather than fact,[4] and that Jesus was mistaken in his apocalyptic apprehensions.[5] He felt that miracles do not become Jesus, spoiling his perfect humanity, and that his godlike quality lies in his teachings.[6] How great was his esteem may be judged by this scale:

> From the slime at the bottom of the primordial ocean up to Jesus of Nazareth.[7]

This estimate of Jesus as the flower of humanity is enlarged in another passage:

[Science] knows Jesus as a great teacher and prophet, and as the Savior of men. How? By virtue of the contract made in the Council of the Trinity as set forth in the creed of Calvinism? No; but by His unique and tremendous announcement of the law of love, and the daily illustration of it in his own life. Salvation by Jesus is salvation by self-renunciation, and by gentleness, mercy, charity, purity, and by all the divine qualities he illustrated. He saves us when we are like him — as tender, as charitable, as unworldly, as devoted to principle, as self-sacrificing. His life and death do inspire in mankind these things; fill them with this noble ideal. He was a soul impressed, as perhaps no other soul has ever been, with the oneness of man with God, and that the Kingdom of Heaven is not a *place*, but a state of mind.... I by no means say that this is the only view that can be taken of Jesus as the Savior of mankind.[8]

Tribute is implied in this modernization:

If the preacher were to say: 'My friends, we are all brothers of this man Jesus Christ, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone; what he felt we may feel; what he saw we may see; what he did we may do; we have in kind, though maybe not in degree, the same power and capacities he had; we can live as pure, as noble, as disinterested a life as he lived; we may show, in a measure, the same meekness, gentleness, humility, unselfishness, lovingness, charity, truthfulness, brotherliness as he showed, and that coming to him means coming to our better selves, to the Jesus within us, to our capacity to be and do like him' we should understand him.[9]

He is glad to say that Christ would have made short work of the creedmongers,[10] for he was a teacher of one doctrine only:

> Jesus is as free from any theological bias as a child is from metaphysics. He taught but one thing; namely, that the Kingdom of Heaven is in the condition of the heart, a condition he illustrated by his own life.[11]

In spite of his anti-personalistic philosophy, he wrote this rare passage regarding a rare thing:

> True religion and undefiled is just as rare as true poetry. As the poet hungers for the beautiful, so the religious nature hungers for the divine — that which Jesus exemplified more fully than any other man — the humanization of the eternal power of the universe, or the fatherhood and brotherhood of God.[12]

What a fine phrase that is! — 'The brotherhood of God,' and inspired, we may be sure, by his own aspiration. A quotation already made tells us as much about his estimate of Jesus as of Whitman:

> Walt Whitman is the Christ of the modern world — he alone redeems it; justifies it, shows it divine; floods and saturates it with divine-human love.... I think I see clearly how Jesus came to be deified — his followers loved him; love transforms everything.[13]

THE CHURCH

While Burroughs wrote deprecatingly: 'It was Paul and not Christ who led the way in formulat-

ing a Christian creed and theology,' [14] he nevertheless admired the organizer of the Early Church, calling him 'a master-spirit along with Plato,' [15] 'the Father of Christianity,' [16] and a savior of the world.[17] He said that Paul's epistles 'are full of the wisdom of the soul — full of the things that save us in this world'; [18] and he pointed out his eternal value to the race:

> Paul's theology may be true or false: what is forever true and real is his fervid piety, his spiritual power, his eloquent humility, and his love for mankind.[19]

Burroughs realized the necessity of a Church of some kind, with a discernment which has not always been shown by her critics:

> It is difficult to see how Christianity, as a people's religion, can be preserved by its natural and verifiable truth alone... what is distinctive and valuable in Christianity is the incarnation of these truths in a living system of beliefs and observances which not only take hold of men's minds, but which move their hearts.[20]

In spite of this, he was not enamored of the organization already in the field:

> The teachings of Jesus himself were simple and natural in the extreme, but out of the notions which were formed *about* Jesus there grew up a religious organization which was equally the extreme of complexity and artificiality. For seventeen hundred years mankind were under its sway as under a nightmare.[21]

He appreciated the Church as a warm home in a cold universe,[22] and writes:

> I often look back and envy my father the satisfaction he got in his church. He got companionship. He was one of a fold. He didn't feel the great cosmic chill as I feel it.... I suppose I get from literature something like what my father got from his church. The church saved him, and this other will save me.[23]

He supported the Church, but rarely attended services, being somewhat conscience-stricken in this, for he considered that attendance is better than absence for most people, and 'my example is not a good one.'[24]

As for the members of the Church, his dislike of 'saints' was no doubt rooted in boyhood observations as well as adult experiences, and his disenchantment — shared by many — led him to say that he could see little or no difference between believers and unbelievers except the belief.[25] He writes:

> Holy men have had their day.... For my part the most lovable and admirable men and women I have known have had no savor of sanctity. They were wise, kind, helpful, loving, living with zest the life of everyday, intent on making their earthly lives square with what is generally accepted as right conduct.[26]

What an indictment of 'holiness'! But Burroughs knew what real Christianity was; as he wrote to a tolerant and understanding friend:

You have, as I always knew you had, much of the spirit of Him who said, 'Neither do I condemn thee.' [27]

A sad observation in his journal on one dear to him, is an exact description of many a 'saint of God':

The spirit in which she condemns evil is worse than the evil itself.[28]

How poorly this compares with the large-heartedness of Whitman, to say nothing of 'the Friend of publicans and sinners'!

In the last century, too many churchmen were religious for prudential reasons. Most people today would agree with Burroughs that the exemplification of Jesus is Christianity, and the essence of it is the love he had for all men:

If you can't return good for evil, it's a mockery to call yourself a Christian.... It's the love of truth and the doing to others as we would be done by that we should aspire to.... Christ exemplified that.[29]

A kinsman provides him with an instance:

[J. C. Burroughs] was one of the few men I have known of whom I felt, 'He has walked with Christ' — so simple, sincere, gentle, charitable and brotherly.[30]

Speaking for a group whose number is uncertain, and perhaps even for himself, he says:

It is curious that so many men who repudiate the creed of Christianity have its spirit.[31]

If John Burroughs had been asked why Church members were as he depicted them, he would have pointed an accusing finger at the pulpit. He was a generous critic, too, and always took easily to ministers, as they found it easy to take to him. He had admired the old 'elders' of his early days for their rugged personalities, and could make comparisons odious:

> The old preachers, too, what a contrast to the flippant, scholarly, polished men of to-day! [32]

In his New Jersey days, Beecher had spoiled him for the majority of preachers he heard, and he enjoyed very few sermons. He knew Beecher's weaknesses, however:

> He gave forth no divine light and no divine warmth, yet he amused and warmed and swayed the multitude. He was peculiarly American in his freedom, his audacity, his breadth, and in his secularization of the pulpit.[33]

Burroughs enjoyed individual preachers, but he offered keen criticism of the profession. He once said that 'priests pervert religion,' [34] and wrote approvingly of Carlyle:

> He took the great facts of existence out of the mouths of priests, out of their conventional theological swathing, where they were fast becoming mummified, and presented them *quick* or as living and breathing realities.[35]

The 'conventional swathing' he referred to again

as 'the meaningless jargon in sermons to-day,' [36] and we sympathize with this entry in his journal:

> So much writing and speaking is like machine-work. The Sunday sermon, and the leading editorial, are generally pieces of machine-work, as if you turned the crank and the discourse came out.[37]

His judgment was that 'the pulpit spoils any man for serious thinking,' [38] and as early as twenty-two he discerned: 'The thoughts of ordinary preachers are half-live coals, half buried in ashes.' [39] Still Burroughs was convinced that the pulpit had a great work to do; in his later years he wrote an unpublished essay on the inadequacy of modern ministers, under the title, 'The Hungry Sheep.' [40] This essay was an answer to one with the same title published by William Lyon Phelps, who contended that the decay of ministerial faith was the cause of empty pews. Burroughs stated that this was unfair to the pulpit, for it is the Time-Spirit which is affecting the attitude of people to the religion of the Church. It is because the Church has lost its authority, and must compete for popular attention on a level with other institutions that the position of the preacher is so difficult. He, too, is no longer surrounded by glamor, but must be enough of a man to compel attention to his words. To-day, it is the man that draws the crowd, not the doctrine, however orthodox or heterodox. Hence, while there are as able

men in the pulpit to-day as there ever were, the great need is for men who possess the appetizing salt of originality in thought and character.

It is interesting to notice that out of all Burroughs's writings, Phillips Brooks is mentioned only in this essay. He is referred to as 'the great Boston Bishop,' and commended for 'salting the sheep' with his personal power. Brooks does not seem to have made any impress on Burroughs's life, although he was answering many of Burroughs's arguments, and interpreting Christianity to a modern world.

On the whole, Burroughs felt that the Church was a great and necessary institution that had lost her way and her purpose, and he was rather saddened, than gladdened, by the thought.

THE BIBLE

The reader of John Burroughs is struck by his frequent use of Biblical phrases and cadences. Fortunately, the Bible was not spoiled for him by its misuse in the church of his boyhood. What was regarded as a sealed casket filled with magical formulæ of every conceivable description, and for every conceivable purpose, became for him what it is to all intelligent people — a collection of fascinating documents; fascinating, because alive with human experience of the Divine. With appreciation of its true values he wrote:

People left to themselves do make such

wretched work with the Bible, do belittle and vulgarize it so! They take a text here and a text there, and brood over them, and make a great noise over a nest full of addled eggs; for a text, wrenched from its context and read in any spirit but that in which it was written becomes as an addled egg.[41]

In this connection he coined an apt term — 'supertextualists.' This was a pioneering position when taken, but Burroughs had seen so much text-juggling, that in an unthinking moment he made the impossible statement that:

Christianity is a workable hypothesis; it solves the problem of life to vast numbers of persons; but how irrational and puerile its philosophy, founded upon the myth of the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden! *Destroy this myth and you have cut off the tap-root of Christianity!* [42] [Italics mine.]

The first thought in this passage has particular value in these pragmatic days, but surely Homer nodded as he penned the rest of it!

In his boyhood notebook are found Biblical citations,[43] and when but twenty-two he wrote in his journal words that are extraordinarily modern, and profound in their insight:

There is a Spirit in the Bible that floats all its facts as a river floats its ice and driftwood; there is a great catholic sense, a mighty ocean current, that is as unchanging as the revolutions of the earth; and the church or religion that reaches down to this is borne on by the forces of nature

and in the very teeth of the surface winds and currents.[44]

He thought the Bible was the greatest of the sacred literatures,[45] and called it the 'great deep, its primordial ocean' of religion.[46] But he could not read it as his fathers did:

> How different the feeling and purpose with which I sit down to read the Bible from that which Father and Grandfather sat down to read it! I sit down to read it as a book, a curious and instructive legend, and to suck the literary value out of it.... It was a solemn and devout exercise with them; with me it is simply a search after truth and beauty, in a mood more critical than devout.... It is full of error, of course, full of human infirmities; but it is flooded with the sentiment of God, and the aspiration of the soul toward the Infinite; and this is the main matter.[47]

His enjoyment of the Pauline Epistles has already been indicated. Of the utterances of Isaiah and Jeremiah he remarked:

> They were true from the first and always, as the impassioned yearnings and uprisings and reachings-forth of high God-burdened souls at all times are true.[48]

And of the Gospels:

> Their certitude, their good faith, their sweetness, their solemnity, their mysticism, and their aroma of the sacred and divine are almost irresistible.[49]

He felt, of course, that the Biblical miracles

had been finally discredited by science, and that what the Church had treated as historical facts are really inward experiences which are always contemporary,[50] so that to disprove the factual truth of the Bible does not damage its spiritual value.[51] This does not go well with his statement that the problem of Christianity reduces itself to a sifting of documents. He writes: 'This is the modern gospel; this is the one vital and formative religious thought of modern times,' [52] and there is great value in the suggestion that what is really vital in the Bible is reproducible, a judgment which anticipated Harry Emerson Fosdick by some forty years.[53]

THEOLOGY

John Burroughs detested theology, and this, more than anything else, biassed him against organized Christianity. The mania of the Church for systematization and formularization of God and his ways, really aroused him. Dr. Barrus says that he was too intolerant of dogmatists, and stripped the truth away with the creeds sometimes.[54] He said to Clifton Johnson:

> I have no patience with those people who know all about God and his plans — who, as Matthew Arnold says, 'speak of God as if he lived around the corner, where they interviewed him daily.' [55]

He wrote of Carlyle what is true of himself:

He could not endure the dogma that the Church rested upon, the pedestal of clay upon which the golden image was reared. The gold he held to, as do all serious souls, but the dogma of clay he quickly dropped.[56]

This deeply rooted dislike led him into making many dogmatic assertions of his own, and scientific dogma certainly ensnared him. He confessed to the temptations to 'beat the big drum in science and philosophy,'[57] and to write too much on those themes, for after all, theology is an ephemeral affair:

Theology passes; religion, as a sentiment or feeling of awe and reverence in the presence of the vastness and the mystery of the universe remains.[58]

There are words of his which sting because of the truth they contain:

How curious and absurd this jargon of the theologian sounds to an outsider! And jargon it is.... There is no sense or reason in it. It comes down to us from the dark ages.[59]

In his antipathy to jargon, Burroughs was consistent, for he had the same opinion about the jargon used in ornithologies. In science or religion, his aim was stripping away the husks, and getting at the kernel of things. He believed that 'all religious and ethical systems grow out of our egoism,'[60] which explains why he wrote:

I think the New Theology is as bad as the Old. Theology as such, anyway, is death to me.[61]

He was disadvantaged in not fully realizing the significance of the stirrings which were taking place in the realms of theology and biblical criticism. 'Lux Mundi,' edited by Bishop Gore, and Bruce's 'Miraculous Element in the Gospels' surprised him by their 'advanced' position. They more or less annoyed him for the same reason — they did not antagonize him enough![62] His own essay, 'Science and Theology,' in 'The Light of Day,' disappointed him because the orthodox liked it too well![63] The two books just mentioned convinced him that an era of spiritual freedom was ahead, when the bondage of the letter would be destroyed,[64] but what would he have said if he could have known that already those volumes are innocuous enough to be classics?

Some of John Burroughs's convictions about organized Christianity, as here given, have been expressed many times before, and are fated to be expressed many times again. Some of them are unjustified, and some are being made by the Church herself, which of all institutions has shown a capacity for self-criticism. Whether we enjoy these critical shafts, or not, we shall do well to remember his sincere-mindedness, for in his examination of all these matters we find him actuated by the high aim he set for himself in his early youth:

'My life is an apprenticeship to Truth.'

EPILOGUE

In the matter of religion, this generation is not satisfied with knowing a man's inner experience, and his beliefs as interpretations of it; if religion once was a private affair between a man and Reality, it is so no longer. Given a man's spiritual experience and his creed, we desire to know what kind of a man he was as a result of them. Since John Burroughs held that to be a Christian is to live a certain kind of life, we are amply justified in enquiring what his religion achieved for him in his everyday life.

Burroughs's ideals find expression in Emersonian terms:

> Do your work, deal justly, love righteousness, make the most of yourself, cherish the good, the beautiful, the true, practice the Christian and the heathen virtues of soberness, meekness, reverence, charity, unselfishness, justice, mercy, singleness of purpose; obey the commandments, the Golden Rule, imbue your spirit with the wisdom of all ages.[1]

When he was twenty-one he wrote in his journal that some great men are magnificent on their higher levels, but sordid in the affairs of common life;[2] it is to his credit that he was not guilty of his own reproach.

Those who knew him rejoiced in the fellowship of a man who radiated friendliness, youthfulness, and a deep sincerity. He was disarmingly frank in self-criticism, and hypocrisy cannot be associated with his thought and life. His humility in confession appears in many lines of self-analysis, like the following:

I have thirsted to know things.... Over my personal sins and shortcomings I have not been as much troubled as I should.[3]

Life has laid no urgent mission upon me.... I have never felt called upon to reform the world. I have doubtless been culpably indifferent to its troubles and perplexities, and sins and sufferings. ... I have not been a burden-bearer; for shame be it said, perhaps, when there are so many burdens to be borne by someone... I have gone a-fishing while others have labored in the slums for the betterment of their fellows.[4]

We should not be misled by these frank words of a man who would not make excuses for himself. Many found new strength through contact with him, either personally, or through his writings. Are not those whom the downcast seek, to be honored with those who seek the downcast? Those who read the 'Life and Letters' will know also that John Burroughs was no stranger to sacrifice.

The heart of Christian teaching is that the highest expression of religion is love, and it is at

this point that the belief and practice of Burroughs can safely bear comparison with the thought and life of the Church in general. He once wrote beautifully:

> You have only to enlarge your vision and exalt your faith enough, when all things become divine and beautiful; you have only to keep your humanity to its proper pitch, when all men and women become your brothers and sisters.[5]

There is personal experience in these words, as there is in the following:

> To know is not all; it is only half. To love is the other half.... Nothing can take the place of love. Love is the measure of life: only so far as we love do we really live.[6]

We are told that he showed great compassion, both for living creatures and men and women, and it is not surprising that a relative of his should hear him cited as an illustration of the Christian doctrine of love in a Presbyterian church,[7] even though *he* was surprised.

John Burroughs's religion — his quest for a completely satisfying life — gave to the world a man of simplicity and sincerity; with a teachable mind, a loving heart, and an adoring spirit. It is responsible in great measure for the tribute paid by Theodore Roosevelt:

'It is a good thing for our people that you have lived.'

THE END

NOTES

NOTES

The following symbols are used in the references below:

LL	'The Life and Letters of John Burroughs' — Clara Barrus.
HBJ	'The Heart of Burroughs' Journals' — Clara Barrus.
OF	'Our Friend John Burroughs' — Clara Barrus.
BM	'John Burroughs, Boy and Man' — Clara Barrus.
MB	'My Boyhood' — Edited by Julian Burroughs.
JBT	'John Burroughs Talks' — Clifton Johnson.
RJB	'The Real John Burroughs' — William Sloane Kennedy.
SSB	'The Seer of Slabsides' — Dallas Lore Sharp.
WR	'Wake-Robin' — John Burroughs.
BP	'Birds and Poets' — John Burroughs.
LWH	'Locusts and Wild Honey' — John Burroughs.
PP	'Pepacton' — John Burroughs.
FF	'Fresh Fields' — John Burroughs.
SS	'Signs and Seasons' — John Burroughs.
IS	'Indoor Studies' — John Burroughs.
Riv.	'Riverby' — John Burroughs.
Wh.	'Whitman: A Study' — John Burroughs.
LD	'The Light of Day' — John Burroughs.
LV	'Literary Values' — John Burroughs.
LT	'Leaf and Tendril' — John Burroughs.
TC	'Time and Change' — John Burroughs.
SY	'The Summit of the Years' — John Burroughs.
BL	'The Breath of Life' — John Burroughs.
UAT	'Under the Apple Trees' — John Burroughs.
FS	'Field and Study' — John Burroughs.
UM	'Under the Maples' — John Burroughs.
AU	'Accepting the Universe' — John Burroughs.
LH	'The Last Harvest' — John Burroughs.

CHAPTER I

1. AU — Soundings, III.
2. MB, 113.
3. JBT, 226.
4. OF, 59.
5. LD — A Retrospect.
6. JBT, 80 f.
7. HBJ, 113 f.
8. OF, 124 f.
9. MB, 110.
10. *Ibid.*
11. LL, I, 9 f.
12. JBT, 7.
13. HBJ, 106.
14. LL, I, 10.

CHAPTER II

1. LL, I, 8.
2. JBT, 231.
3. LL, I, 33.
4. TC — The Gospel of Nature, IV.
5. HBJ, 241.
6. BM, 45.
7. LL, I, 31.
8. *Op. cit.*, 35 f.
9. *Op. cit.*, 38.
10. *Bloomville Mirror*, May 13, 1856.
11. LL, I, 39.
12. *Op. cit.*, 40.
13. *Op. cit.*, 41.
14. HBJ, 217.
15. *Op. cit.*, 88.
16. *Op. cit.*, 338.
17. *Op. cit.*, 80, 87.

18. LL, II, 346.
19. FF — In Wordsworth's Country.
20. HBJ, 111.
21. LL, I, 45 f.
22. *Op. cit.*, 48.
23. HBJ, 97 f.
24. *Op. cit.*, 100.
25. *Op. cit.*, 29.
26. LL, I, 119.
27. JBT, 181.
28. OF, 43.
29. The Poem 'Waiting' — Clara Barrus, page 14.
30. LL, I, 72.
31. OF, 108.
32. LL, I, 76.
33. *Op. cit.*, 79.
34. *Op. cit.*, 80.
35. *Op. cit.*, 113.
36. *Op. cit.*, 85.
37. *Op. cit.*, 90.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Op. cit.*, 92 f.

CHAPTER III

1. HBJ, 19.
2. LL, I, 109 f.
3. *Op. cit.*, 107.
4. *Op. cit.*, 325.
5. Wh., Chap. VI, I.
6. *Op. cit.*, Chap. II, XVI.
7. *Op. cit.*, Chap. VI, VII.
8. LL, II, 100, 104.
9. HBJ, 237.
10. Wh., Chap. I, XIII.
11. LL, I, 113.

12. *Op. cit.*, 326.
13. *Op. cit.*, 131.
14. HBJ, 42 f.
15. BP — The Flight of an Eagle, I.
16. Wh., Chap. VI, IV.
17. BP — The Flight of an Eagle, III.
18. LL, I, 138.
19. LL, II, 100.
20. *Op. cit.*, 104.
21. AU — The Poet of the Cosmos.

CHAPTER IV

1. MB, 95 f.
2. FS — Religion.
3. LL, II, 347.
4. HBJ, VII.
5. Wh., Chap. II, XV.
6. LV — Lucid Literature.
7. HBJ, 8.
8. LL, I, 277.
9. HBJ, 194.
10. *Op. cit.*, 324.
11. *Op. cit.*, 168.
12. SY — The Noon of Science.
13. OF, 126.
14. HBJ, 15.
15. *Op. cit.*, 20.
16. *Op. cit.*, 25.
17. FF — A Sunday in Cheyne Row, III.
18. HBJ, 199 f.
19. BL — Preface.
20. BM, 30, 35.
21. OF, 77 f., 121.
22. BM, 139.
23. *Ibid.*; OF, 122.

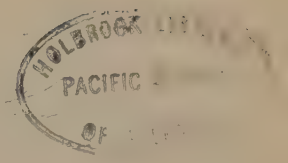
24. HBJ, 15 f.
25. OF, 4.
26. RJB, 56.
27. HBJ, 153.
28. Riv. — Lovers of Nature, I.
29. HBJ, 156.
30. LL, I, 157.
31. TC — The Gospel of Nature, III.
32. LT — The Breath of April, I.
33. LL, II, 231.
34. LWH — Birds and Birds, I.
35. LWH — The Halcyon in Canada.
36. HBJ, 111.
37. SY — The Summit of the Years, I.
38. LL, II, 321.
39. WR, Preface to Riverside Edition.
40. IS — An Egotistical Chapter.
41. LL, I, 70 f.
42. AU — The Faith of a Naturalist, II.
43. SS — A Sharp Lookout.
44. WR — In the Hemlocks.
45. LL, II, 252.
46. LT — An Outlook upon Life, III.
47. SY — In the Noon of Science, IV.
48. LL, I, 53.
49. HBJ, 71.
50. OF, 28.
51. HBJ, 21.
52. LH — Sundown Papers; Following One's Bent.

CHAPTER V

1. AU — The Faith of a Naturalist, I.
2. PP — Nature and the Poets.
3. HBJ, 71 f.
4. LL, II, 302; OF, 196.

5. LL, II, 302.
6. MB, 27.
7. SSB, 17.
8. HBJ, 75.
9. LL, I, 199.
10. LL, II, at 69.
11. OF, 196.
12. Norman Forster — LL, II, 303.
13. OF, 196.
14. 'Things to Come,' 221 f.
15. Starting From Paumanok.
16. BL — The Naturalist's View of Life, I.
17. TC — The Gospel of Nature, IV.
18. LD — Natural versus Supernatural.
19. AU — Soundings, XIII.
20. HBJ, 253.
21. LD — Science and Theology.
22. TC — The Phantoms Behind Us, II.
23. LT — The Grist of the Gods.
24. SY — In the Noon of Science, I.
25. LT — The Grist of the Gods.
26. LL, II, 169.
27. TC — The Phantoms Behind Us, IV.
28. IS — Science and Literature.
29. LD — Science and Theology.
30. IS — Matthew Arnold's Criticism.
31. LH — Day by Day.
32. BL — The Baffling Problem, VII.
33. BL — Life and Science, IV.
34. RJB, 221.
35. BL — The Breath of Life, II.
36. UAT — The Prophet of the Soul, I.
37. LL, I, 188.
38. UAT — The Prophet of the Soul, II.
39. LL, II, 166.
40. *Op. cit.*, 188.

41. LD — In Corroboration of Huxley.
42. LL, I, 391.



CHAPTER VI

1. LV — Literary Values, II.
2. HBJ, 135.
3. *Op. cit.*, 165.
4. *Op. cit.*, 134.
5. JBT, 235.
6. AU — The Faith of a Naturalist, II.
7. AU — Natural Providence, V.
8. LD — Points of View.
9. HBJ, 201.
10. TC — The Worm Striving to be Man.
11. HBJ, 144.
12. *Op. cit.*, 134.
13. FF — A Sunday in Cheyne Row, III.
14. FS — Miscellaneous Notes.
15. LD — The Modern Skeptic.
16. LD — Meditations and Criticisms, VI.
17. *Ibid.*
18. LD — Science and Theology.
19. *Ibid.*
20. LL, II, 209.
21. HBJ, 318.
22. AU — The Faith of a Naturalist, II.
23. HBJ, 257.
24. LL, II, 384.
25. TC — The Phantoms Behind Us, II.
26. TC — The Long Road, VI.
27. HBJ, 240.
28. LL, II, 142.
29. TC — The Long Road, VI.
30. Riv. — Lovers of Nature, I.
31. HBJ, 92.

32. *Op. cit.*, 166.
33. *Op. cit.*, 98.
34. *Op. cit.*, 240.
35. AU — The Universal Beneficence.
36. AU — The Faith of a Naturalist, I.
37. HBJ, 302.
38. LL, II, 274.
39. AU — The Faith of a Naturalist, I.
40. AU — The Universal Beneficence.
41. AU — Shall We Accept the Universe? I.
42. AU — The Universal Beneficence.
43. LD — Natural versus Supernatural.
44. HBJ, 111.
45. TC — The Gospel of Nature, V.
46. HBJ, 127.
47. *Ibid.*
48. IS — Brief Essays, an Open Door.
49. HBJ, 127.
50. LL, II, 228.
51. IS — An Open Door.
52. BL — The Naturalist's View of Life, II.
53. LL, II, 201.
54. LD — Points of View.
55. HBJ, 250.
56. *Op. cit.*, 45.
57. BP — Touches of Nature, II.
58. HBJ, 157.
59. AU — The Universal Beneficence.
60. HBJ, 98.
61. *Op. cit.*, 231.
62. BL — The Naturalist's View of Life, VI.
63. LD — Meditations and Criticisms.
64. LD — Science and Theology.
65. LD — Meditations and Criticisms, IV.
66. UM — Ruminations, IV.
67. BL — The Baffling Problem, VI.

68. LD — Natural versus Supernatural.
69. PP — Nature and the Poets.
70. TC — The Worm Striving to be Man.
71. JBT, 131.
72. AU — The Natural Providence, III.
73. OF, 188.
74. BP — The Flight of an Eagle, III.
75. LT — All's Right with the World, I.
76. LT — An Outlook upon Life, III.
77. LT — All's Right with the World, II.
78. AU — The Faith of a Naturalist, I.
79. LD — From Art to Nature.
80. TC — The Gospel of Nature, III.
81. LL, II, 107.
82. HBJ, 163.
83. *Op. cit.*, 73.
84. LL, II.
85. *Op. cit.*, 415.
86. AU — Horizon Lines, XIV.

CHAPTER VII

1. LD — Natural versus Supernatural.
2. LL, I, 52.
3. LD — Meditations and Criticisms, X.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Op. cit.*, VI.
6. *Op. cit.*, X.
7. LT — The Divine Soil, IV.
8. LD — Science and Theology.
9. LD — The Decadence of Theology.
10. LD — Points of View.
11. LD — Natural versus Supernatural.
12. LL, I, 318.
13. *Op. cit.*, 325.
14. JBT, 236.

15. LD — Science and Theology.
16. HBJ, 265.
17. LD — Science and Theology.
18. HBJ, 265.
19. LD — Science and Theology.
20. IS — Matthew Arnold's Criticism.
21. LD — From Art to Nature.
22. LL, I, 276.
23. JBT, 230 f.
24. *Op. cit.*, 234.
25. LD — Science and Theology.
26. AU — Soundings, XIII.
27. LL, I, 286.
28. *Op. cit.*, 331.
29. JBT, 235.
30. LL, I, 327.
31. *Op. cit.*, 336.
32. HBJ, 247.
33. *Op. cit.*, 139.
34. LL, I, 138.
35. FF — A Sunday in Cheyne Row, IV.
36. LD — The Modern Skeptic.
37. HBJ, 117.
38. LL, I, 308.
39. HBJ, 17.
40. LL, II, 185.
41. IS — Matthew Arnold's Criticism.
42. AU — Soundings, III.
43. BM, 72.
44. HBJ, 19.
45. LD — Science and Theology.
46. HBJ, 135.
47. *Op. cit.*, 111 ff.
48. FF — A Sunday in Cheyne Row, IV.
49. LD — Meditations and Criticisms, XV.
50. LD — Natural versus Supernatural.

51. LD — Science and Theology.
52. LD — Natural versus Supernatural.
53. H. E. Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, Lect. IV.
54. LL, I, 391 f.
55. JBT, 235.
56. FF — A Sunday in Cheyne Row.
57. RJB, 177.
58. LD — Preface.
59. HBJ, 147 f.
60. AU — The Good Devils, V.
61. LL, I, 118.
62. *Op. cit.*, 282, 312.
63. *Op. cit.*, 281 f.
64. LD — Points of View.

EPILOGUE

1. AU — Shall We Accept the Universe? III.
2. HBJ, 11.
3. OF, 137.
4. *Op. cit.*, 132 f.
5. LL, I, 103.
6. LT — The Art of Seeing Things, I.
7. HBJ, 221.

PS1226 .O838 1930
SFTS
Osborne, Clifford Hazeldin
The religion of John
Burroughs

SFTS Library
105 Seminary Road
San Anselmo, CA 94960
(415) 451-2845
All items are subject to recall

GTU Library
3 2400 00681 0281

DATE DUE

JAN 1 9 2011

GAYLORD PRINTED IN U.S.A.